

DRUID MAGAZINE

On Being an American Druid

WINTER 2016

TABLE OF CONTENTS

NEWSFEATURES

Dharma & Druidry, My Personal Journey into Belief and Science, Part 1 <i>by Renu K. Aldrich</i>	8
Hinduism in Brief <i>by Renu K. Aldrich</i>	14
Druidry and the Yamas <i>by Maria Ede-Weaving</i>	15
The Wild Cauldron <i>by Race MoChridhe</i>	18
Goddess Kali <i>by Race MoChridhe</i>	21
Succession Planning <i>by Abaris</i>	24
A Talk with New AODA Archdruid Gordon Cooper <i>by Renu K. Aldrich</i> ...	27

LIVING DRUIDRY

PRACTICAL DRUIDRY

The Forest I Know <i>by faucon of Sakin'el</i>	34
--	----

RITUAL SPACE

Public Ritual Workshop, Part III: Ritual Theory <i>by David North</i>	35
---	----

MAGICAL CRAFTING

The Ritual Crafting Mindset <i>by Richard "Skylaros" Derks</i>	38
--	----

DRUIDRY IN THE WORKPLACE

Inspired by Nature: An Interview with Photographer Anne Hammond-Tooke <i>by Barbara A. Pott</i>	41
--	----

NATURAL WORLD

Cultivating a Sacred Grove for the New World <i>by Lyle Almond</i>	45
Bear Maiden: Companion in Winter <i>by Alison Leigh Lilly</i>	49
Ask the Green Thumb Gurus: How to... Cultivate House Plants <i>by Alec Mayer</i>	54

HEALTHY WAYS

Treating Colds with Homeopathy <i>by Shelley Keneipp</i>	57
--	----

INDIGENOUS WAYS

Rekindling the Sacred Fires: Part Two <i>by Greywolf</i>	62
--	----

Questions? Submissions?

Please send articles or editorial inquiries through the *Druid*
Magazine website at www.druidmagazine.com

EDITORIAL TEAM

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Renu K. Aldrich

CHIEF COPYEDITOR

Melanie Herd

WEBSITE MANAGER

Gary Sell

CHIEF RESEARCHER

Clint Chamberlain

DEPUTY EDITOR

Rob Pacitti

PHOTO CONSULTANT

Brom Hanks

COPYEDITOR

Wendy Gill



Around the Americas

Jason Stieber

Children of the Forest

Ruth Ann Oskolkoff

Druidry in the Workplace

Barbara Pott

Druidry Online

Jeffrey Keefer

Healthy Ways

Shelley Keneipp

Indigenous Ways

Gail Colfax

Magical Crafting

Catrina McDonald

The Natural World

Lyle Almond

Practical Druidry

Moss Magill

Reviews

Sarah Disler

Ritual Space

David North

Voices of Awen

Gail Nyoka

Writing Contest

Rob Pacitti



DRUID MAGAZINE

Volume 1, Issue 3

This magazine is an independent publication produced by an all-volunteer staff in service to the community. Please help support it by making a donation.



Donate



JOIN THE TEAM!

We are looking for talented:

Copyeditors
Illustrators
Photographers
Researchers
Social Media/
PR Director
Tech Support

© 2014–2016 *Druid Magazine*.
All rights reserved. Click [here](#)
for full copyright statement
and sharing guidelines

Cover photo © *Brom Hanks*

EISTEDDFOD

VOICES OF AWEN

Storytelling in the Hindu Tradition <i>by Gail Nyoka</i>	69
“Sai Kala,” “Crepusculum,” and “Dehiscence” <i>by Race MoChridhe</i>	71
“In Between” <i>by Matthew Ikonen</i>	73
“A Winter Poem” <i>by Raymond Taliesin</i>	74
“The Druid’s Rede” <i>by Janice Scott-Reeder King</i>	75
History of the Druid’s Rede <i>by George King</i>	75
Becoming an Earth Pilgrim <i>by M.F. Harding</i>	77

CHILDREN OF THE FOREST

An Invitation to Youth and Children <i>by Ruth Ann Oskolkoff</i>	81
--	----

WRITING CONTEST

☆ WINNER: “On Becoming a Druid—For the First Time” <i>by Richard “Renard” Fox</i>	82
“Wintry Reminders” <i>by Jacqueline Black</i>	85
“My Inspiration” <i>by R. Judas Brown</i>	88

REVIEWS

Book Review of <i>Imbolc: Rituals, Recipes & Lore for Brigid’s Day</i> <i>by Sarah Disler</i>	89
--	----

AROUND THE AMERICAS

Hallowed Homecoming: Meeting the Ancestors <i>by Robert Pacitti</i>	92
---	----

ON BEING AN AMERICAN DRUID

Growing Roots <i>by Melanie Herd</i>	95
On Being An American Druid <i>by Kenneth Foote</i>	99

DISCLAIMER

Information contained in this magazine is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any chronic disease or emergency condition. Content, including recipes and remedies, is not intended as a substitute for advice from your physician or other health care professional. Before consuming herbs, supplements, and/ or remedies and testing recipes, please consult with your physician or healthcare professional, and carefully read all information provided by the author or manufacturer, including the label of any homeopathic remedy.





FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK...

RENU K. ALDRICH



WELCOME TO THE THIRD DRUID MAGAZINE!

Dear readers,

In this time of “light of winter,” many of us do not just experience depletion symbolically, but in our bodies and psyches. Modern times—from climate change and the potential sixth mass extinction to gun violence and unstable economies—can be toxic to our souls. It can be difficult to see the flame of goodness amidst what can no longer be ignored: As a society, we have not cared for ourselves and our Mother as we should have. Is it too late? While it might be easy to give up in the chaos and confusion of this shared pathway, this seems inconsistent with the Druid path. Despite all of the differences in modern Druid beliefs, a core and abiding connection remains as lovers of the Earth. As nature teaches us, depletion has its purpose—to deconstruct what must regrow, hopefully stronger and better after a time of replenishment.

This time of year holds many similarities across various cultures, but for me it especially highlights the kinship between Druidry and the Dharmic religions, namely Hinduism. This issue focuses on these relationships through several articles: my [personal path and research](#), Maria Ede-Weaving’s combination of [Druidry and Yogic principles](#); Race MoChridhe’s exploration of the [divine feminine](#) across both East and West; and Gail Nyoka’s examination of [storytelling in the Hindu tradition](#).

Also in this issue, Abaris takes a hard look at [succession](#) in consideration of OBOD’s future. We started this magazine as a way to build bridges across groups and individuals who identify with OBOD, and it has not stopped there. We have been blessed to connect with other Druids and likeminded souls from across the world. In this issue alone, we have authors from two groups I had not known previously. Alison Leigh Lilly, who provides us with a beautiful story of her [bear companion](#), is a member of the Druid Order of the Three Realms in addition to being a founding member of her local [CUUPS](#) chapter. Faucon of Sakin’el, who takes us on a [journey to a forest](#), is a member of North Carolina’s [White Oak Grove](#), which is affiliated with the New Order of Druids. We [visit with new AODA Archdruid Gordon Cooper](#). Richard “Renard” Fox, guardian of the Druidic Dawn and editor-in-chief of its [Aontacht magazine](#) won this issue’s [Writing Contest](#). Greywolf, also known as Philip Shallcrass and the head of the [British Druid Order](#), gives us an eloquent part two on [Rekindling the Sacred Fires](#). Richard “Skyllaros” Derks, who is a member of both [OBOD](#) and AODA, encourages us to have a [ritual crafting mindset](#) when making tools.

Addressing issues prevalent during this time of year, Shelley Keneipp educates us on [how to treat colds with homeopathy](#) and Alec Mayer gives us



expert advice on caring for house plants. Looking ahead to spring, Sarah Disler tastes recipes from *Imbolc: Rituals, Recipes & Lore for Brigid's Day*, part of Llewellyn's Sabbat Essentials series.

Lyle Almond explores how to cultivate a sacred grove with trees and plants native to the Americas. Continuing in this light, Ken Foote delivers an essay not so much on being an American Druid as being a *Druid in America*. DM's own Chief Copyeditor Melanie Herd gives us a peek inside her personal path in *Growing Roots*. David North takes a deeper look into the theory behind performing ritual.

Barbara Pott takes a look behind the camera at photographer Anne Hammond-Tooke's artistry. We are blessed to share the art of Anne and other fantastic contributors in these pages. A huge thanks to Brom Hanks, who not only provided his own brilliant photos, but provided technical expertise.

Also in our third issue, M.F. Harding continues his journey as an *Earth Pilgrim*, while several poems by MoChridhe, Matthew Ikonen, and Raymond Taliesin fill us with *Voices of Awen*. Janice Scott-Reeder and George King share their *Druid's Rede*. Rob Pacitti reminisces about this past Samhuinn's *Hallowed Homecoming retreat*. In addition, Ruth

Ann Oskolkoff invites children and youth to submit stories, art, or poetry to a section devoted to them.

We welcome Almond as editor of *The Natural World* and Disler as *Reviews* editor, both members of the OBOD Oak and Eagle Seed Group in northern Virginia. I have had the great fortune to celebrate recently with Oak and Eagle, and call many members brother and sister. Connecting with others in person and across our virtual world serves to remind us on all fronts that we are not really alone. All of these interactions inspired me to develop a list of Druid groups (*see table*).

Instead of a divisive world, let's create one in which we honor our common goals while we find joy in the richness of diversity and in learning other schools of thought. I invite Druids from all backgrounds to share with us. Isolation, seclusion, and even hibernation may all be necessary parts of our evolution and growth, but now, even as the Earth lays underneath a blanket of white crystals, it is time to prepare to re-emerge with the light of darkness leading our way into spring.

Yours under the Oaks,
Renu /\

PRACTICUM

As you choose what to plant in spring, also consider what personal seeds you wish to nurture. What would you like your chrysalis self to leave behind in the cocoon as you emerge from dormancy?

Renu K. Aldrich, M.A., LMFT, aka the Hindu Druid, has been a member of the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids since 1997. She is a doctoral student at Virginia Tech, where she specializes in working with developmental trauma survivors and studies how to incorporate Eastern healing techniques into Western psychotherapy. Initially a journalist, Renu also has served as a communications executive in the publishing world, in academia, and on Wall Street. She launched Druid Magazine in 2015 in service to the spiritual community.



DRUID GROUPS

Ancient Order of Druids in America	The Druid Network	Order of WhiteOak
Ancient Order of Druids, Oregon	Druid Order of the Three Realms*	Reformed Druids of Gaia
Anglesey Druid Order	Druidic Dawn	Reformed Druids of North America
Ár nDraíocht Féin, a Druid Fellowship	Glastonbury Order of Druids	Loyal Arthurian Warband
Avalon Druid Order	Henge of Keltria	Secular Order of Druids
Berengaria Order of Druids	Imbas	Sisterhood of Avalon
British Druid Order	Insular Order of Druids	United Ancient Order of Druids
Celtic Traditionalist Order of Druids	International Grand Lodge of Druid-ism	United Ancient Order of Druids in Marin County
Cotswold Order of Druids	New Order of Druids	<i>By its nature, this list cannot be exhaustive or perhaps not even current!</i>
Council of British Druid Orders	Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids	
Druid Clan of Dana	Order of the Mithril Star	
Druid Gorsedd of the First Circle*		<i>*No web site</i>



© Brom Hanks





NEWS FEATURES

DHARMA & DRUIDRY: MY PERSONAL JOURNEY INTO BELIEF AND SCIENCE, PART 1

BY RENU K. ALDRICH

My life has a theme to it: transcendence and transformation. I have transcended boundaries and labels by being Indian-American, by having brown skin amid mostly White classmates, and by following a path that combines both Druidry and Hinduism. Transformation is now how I continue to live beyond labels. Turning the seeds of my childhood pain into harvests of love and enlightenment was a personal journey that led to a calling to facilitate healing for others through psychotherapy and, more recently, conducting research.

I was born Hindu in New York to immigrant parents after the Beatles made it cool to be brown and before people confused us with terrorists. The difficulty of acculturation and immigrant life is becoming part of the research I am developing as a doctoral student at Virginia Tech because I lived it, far from a temple and apart from even the immigrant Indian community. Without the warm embrace of the collectivist culture,

our religious practices shrunk. But while specific traditions, such as my mother symbolically offering food to the moon in prayer for my father's good health waned over the years, the inherent spiritual philosophy—or *dharma*—has always been suffused in my life.

Being spiritual for me means an integration of my beliefs into my everyday experience, living and breathing

it as part of who I am. The Sanskrit word *dharma* does not have a direct translation into English and means something slightly different in the various Eastern religions,



Siva Temple, Kauai Aadheenam, Hawaii

Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism (Das, 2014b). In Hinduism, *dharma* means your personal rules for living in accordance with virtue. This holds me accountable not just to an image of God, but to myself and to my own values as well. As I developed into an adult, I incorporated aspects of other Eastern philosophies and almost any other spiritual thought I came across into



my own religious belief. As part of my seeking, I was a Wiccan High Priestess before I found Druidry in 1997. However, the work didn't resonate with me as I thought it would. It was only after I returned to Hinduism and developed a deeper faith in the religion I was born into that Druidry made any sense to me. In all of my rituals and initiations, elements of both faiths combine to form a unified sense of deity.

The divine in Hinduism is like the sun: It is almost impossible to see the glowing orb directly, so we comprehend it through its rays. Each God and Goddess is a sunray, helping us to understand a specific form of energy that is individual and part of the whole. Human beings are like fingers on a hand, solo entities and also part of the larger Atman, the world soul. The Hindu deity that resonates with me the most is Lord Siva, who is called the destroyer. He is, in fact, an agent of change. By deconstructing what we no longer need, we can rebuild ourselves stronger and healthier, much like a forest fire destroys stagnancy in favor of new growth.

Druidry has never conflicted with my Hinduism; in fact, it has augmented my understanding of its concepts and added to my abilities to infuse my life with my spiritual beliefs. It is Druidry that inspires me to garden and see the evolution of our lives from the seeds that grow in spring to the plants that must die back in winter. As part of my spiritual development in merging my beliefs into one coherent system, I went beyond what

I thought and researched the possibility that I was not an anomaly, that indeed the Druid spirit and Hindu heart were once one. In this first article of a two-part series, I offer some of what I learned in my search for proof that back in time the Dharmic and Celtic people were one tribe.

SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION

At the base of the common ancestry theories lie multi-layered, intriguing connections between the ancient Druids and Hindus as well as their modern-day equivalents. There are significant parallels in linguistics, spiritual traditions, beliefs, sacred chant and meditation, festivals and holidays, mythology and folklore, symbols, astrology, music and poetry, and laws, customs, and trainings (Carr-Gomm, 2009; Hinduism Today, 1994).

Linguistics

The very name Druid is composed of two Celtic word roots which have parallels in Sanskrit. Indeed, the root vid for knowledge, which also emerges in the Sanskrit word Veda, demonstrates the similarity. The Celtic root dru which means "immersion" also appears in Sanskrit. So a Druid was one 'immersed in knowledge.' (Berresford-Ellis, 2000, p. 1)

The first point of entry for validating a common origin is language. During the 1,000 years of darkness for Druidry, Ireland remained free from the influence



of Latin culture because the Roman legion's heavy fist did not extend to the area. By the time of Christian persecution in the 5th century, Irish culture had retained clear and startling links to Hindu society (Berresford-Ellis, 2000).

Old Irish	Sanskrit
<i>aire</i> = freeman	<i>arya</i> = noble
<i>noeb</i> = good	<i>naib</i> = holy
<i>bodar</i> = deaf	<i>badhirah</i> = deaf
<i>nemed</i> = sacred	<i>names</i> = respect
<i>ri</i> = king	<i>raja</i> = king

Fig. 1. Comparison of Old Irish and Sanskrit words (Ellis, 2000)

According to Harvard University professor and leading linguistics expert Calvert Watkins (1963), Old Irish is closer to the language from which all Indo-European languages developed and can offer a far better comparison with Vedic Sanskrit than can Classical Greek or Latin.

Renowned Celtic scholar Peter Berresford-Ellis (2000) has analyzed linguistic similarities between Sanskrit and Old Irish (see Fig. 1). For example, both ancient Irish and Hindus used the name *Budh* for the planet Mercury; the root *budh* in Celtic languages as well as Sanskrit means enlightened, exalted, victorious, and accomplished. Derived from this root are some famous names: Celtic Queen Boudicca of the 1st century AD, Jim Bowie (1796–1836) of the Texas Alamo, and, of course, Buddha.

Spiritual Traditions & Beliefs

There are numerous common spiritual beliefs between Druidry and Hinduism, leading the non-profit educational magazine *Hinduism Today* to conduct an extensive comparison in 1994. Much of the following information is taken from their study and validated or augmented by works from leading scholars, such as Philip Carr-Gomm, the chosen chief of the order to which I have belonged since 1997, the *Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids*. (Please note that the beliefs and origin source of various Druid orders may differ [Greer, 2013].)

Both Hindus and Druids believe that the dead continue to live in alternative realms of the Universe until reincarnation into a human or animal body (Carr-Gomm, 2009; Das, 2014a). Human souls are indestructible, but the Universe is created and destroyed in a repeating cycle through fire and water (symbolic of primal light and sound). They also prize truth telling as a supernatural power and hold honor and eloquence in high esteem. Ancient Druids and Vedic Hindus honored women, who were allowed to own property and become priestesses.

Fundamentally, Druids and Hindus believe that human beings are connected to nature and are only a slice of the web of life. Both value karma, which is the law of cause and effect, reaping what we sow both in the field and in life. Restorative justice has been a cornerstone of Druidry, which believes that the Universe is our ultimate judge and juror. As such, many Dru-



ids adopt the Hindu practice of *Ahimsa*, which avoids the negative karmic consequences of violence. The Druid tradition has long honored being in service to others akin to the Hindu path of *Bhakti Yoga*. Many Druids continue to strive to be healers, counselors, peacekeepers, mediators, judges, and priests today (Hughes, 2007).

While Druids are known for their ability to manipulate energy and cast spells, some might be surprised to know that the Hindu's ancient Atharva Veda scripture contains incantations and spells (Embree, 1972).

Sacred Chant & Meditation

Kirtan is the ancient Hindu devotional practice of chanting the names of God and mantras in ecstatic call-and-response format. This is done in both temples and homes as a pathway to the Divine through the power of words and music combined. Chanting *Aum* (also written as *Om* in the West), the most sacred Hindu syllable that conveys the

essence of the Universe, is just one of the many forms of meditation inspired by the religion. (Many attribute the origin of meditation to Buddhism, but it actually evolved from the ancient Hindu faith; Buddhism developed key differences from Hinduism, such as the belief that the individual mindset is only an illusion.¹) In fact, the practice of yoga was designed by the ancient Hindus to calm the body so that the mind can be still for meditation.

Druids chant *Awen* instead of *Aum* to connect to the Universe, and meditation is an integral part of this pathway as well. They also believe that words can be imbued with power in both chanting and in spellcasting, which is just another form of prayer (Hughes, 2014).

The Ancient Druids sought meditative ecstasy and used special postures similar to yoga asanas (Hinduism Today, 1994; Nichols, 1990). Bards-in-training in Ireland during the quiet period of Druidic history were known to keep all-night vigils in the darkness with a stone on their stomachs to foster the deep diaphragmatic breathing that is the focus of *Pranayama Yoga*. A key element of yoga is the *Kundalini*, which is similar to the Druids' leaping salmon of wisdom.

Festivals & Holidays

"Ritual was developed as a means of contacting and utilizing the energy within humans as well as in the natural world" (Cunningham, 2002, p. 10).

By some estimates, Hinduism has 330 million Gods in its pantheon (Verma, 2005), and Hindus joke that

COMMON HOLIDAYS

Atonement & Mourning & Giving of Alms

Jewish: Yom Kippur

Christian: Lent (Ash Wednesday to Easter)

Muslim: Eid al-Adha

Hindu: Pitru Paksha Shradh, Navratri

Druid: Samhuinn

Return of the Light/ Creation/ New Year

Jewish: Rosh Hashana, Hanukkah

Christian: Christmas

Muslim: Eid al-Fitr

Hindu: Dusshera, Diwali

Druid: Alban Arthan



every day is a festival for one or the other. Many holidays relate to the cycle of nature, such as the changing of the seasons or the harvest, but some have lost that connection over time. Others relate to specific deities' birthdays or accomplishments. While Indians use the modern Gregorian calendar for everyday life, the dates of festivals are calculated using the Hindu calendar. Each lunar day of the 15 phases of the moon has specific properties to make it appropriate for specific observances.

Druids celebrate the seasons through eight festivals per year, including four dictated by the relationship between Earth and Sun (Carr-Gomm, 2006). The summer and winter solstices, the longest and shortest days of the year, occur when the sun rises and sets at either the most southerly or northerly points. The spring and autumn equinoxes take place when the lengths of day and night are in balance. The other four Druid holidays have evolved from the traditional harvest festivals of ancient Western Europe.

In addition to chanting, both Hindus and Druids conduct rites suffused by the elements of earth, air, fire, water, and spirit (Hinduism Today, 1994). Fire is a central focus point of the ceremonies, which include food, flowers, and incense. While the Druids use herbs, mead, fruit, and cakes, the Hindus use ghee, spices, fruit, rice, and sweets as symbolic gifts to God. After giving these gifts to the deities, the rites end with the participants consuming the offerings.

There are also startling similarities

in some of the actual holidays themselves. The Winter Solstice marks the new solar year for the Druids and for Hindus (Carr-Gomm, 2006; Verma, 2005). The Hindu festival of Diwali celebrates the awareness of our inner light as the Druid's Winter Solstice, or Alban Arthan, welcomes the rebirth of the Sun-God as the Celtic Son of Light, the Mabon. During Pitru Paksha Shradh in September/ October, Hindus honor the ancestors. Druids celebrate Samhuinn, the predecessor to Halloween, on October 31st. Samhuinn is one of the oldest, most sacred Druid ceremonies on record; it is a time to commune with the dead and begin a transition to the inner world, releasing unwanted aspects of your life and the sorrows in your heart.

To be continued in Part Two...

Interested in conversation about how Dharma and Druidry complement? Join our new discussion group.

Note

1. See <http://creately.com/diagram/example/ha2l-r9kv2/Buddhism%20vs.%20Hinduism> for a clarifying diagram on the differences between Hinduism and Buddhism.

References

- Baba, B. (2010). *Who is Lord Siva?* Retrieved online from author's web site at <http://www.eaisai.com/baba/docs/shivas.html>
- Berresford-Ellis, P. (2000). Our Druid cousins: Meet the Brahmins of ancient Europe, the high caste of Celtic society. *Hinduism Today*. Retrieved online at <http://www.hinduismtoday.com/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=4274>



- Berresford-Ellis, P. (2002). *Celtic Myths & Legends*. New York, NY: Avalon Publishing Group.
- Carr-Gomm, P. (2006). *What do Druids believe? (What do we believe?)*. London: Granta Publications.
- Carr-Gomm, P. (2009). *Druidism and the ancient religions of India*. The Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids. Retrieved online at http://www.druidry.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=PagEd&file=index&topic_id=1&page_id=164
- Cunningham, S. (2002). *The Truth About Witchcraft Today*. Llewellyn Publications
- Das, S. (2014a). Theories about the origin of Hinduism: The basics of Hinduism. About.com. Retrieved online at <http://hinduism.about.com/od/hinduism101/a/origin.htm>
- Das, S. (2014b). What is Dharma? About the path of righteousness. About.com. Retrieved online at <http://hinduism.about.com/od/basics/a/dharma.htm>
- Editors of Hinduism Today Magazine. (1994, May). The Celts: Common Ground of European Celts & Indian Vedic Hindus. *Hinduism Today Magazine*. Retrieved online at <http://www.hinduismtoday.com/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=3289>
- Embree, A. T. (Ed.). (1972). *The Hindu tradition*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Greer, J. M. (2013). ADF and OBOD. *Ár nDraíocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship*. Retrieved online at <http://www.adf.org/about/basics/adf-and-obod.html>
- Hinduism by Country. (2016). In Wikipedia. Retrieved online at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism_by_country
- Hopkins, T. J. (1971). *The Hindu religious tradition*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Hughes, K. (2007). *Natural Druidry*. Loughborough, U.K.: Thoth Publications.
- Hughes, K. (2014). *The book of Celtic magic*. Woodbury, MN: Llewellyn Publications.
- Mahabharata. (2016). In Wikipedia. Retrieved online at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahabharata>
- Morgan, D. (2001). *The best guide to Eastern philosophy and religion: Whether you are a believer, a seeker, or just inquisitive, this is the guide for you*. New York, NY: Renaissance Books.
- Ramayana. (2016). In Wikipedia. Retrieved online at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramayana>
- Verma, M. (2005). *Fasts and festivals of India*. New Delhi: Diamond Pocket Books.
- Watkins, C. (1963). *Indo-European Metrics and Archaic Irish Verse*. Dublin: Celtica (Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies).
- Zimmer, H. (1951). *Philosophies of India*. J. Campbell (Ed.). New York, NY: Princeton University Press.

RESOURCES

Commonalities between the Celts and Vedic Hindus

<http://www.hinduismtoday.com/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=3289>

OBOD web site on Dharma & Druidry

<http://www.druidry.org/druid-way/other-paths/druidry-dharma>

About Hinduism

<http://hinduism.about.com/od/basics/p/hinduismbasics.htm>

Join our new discussion group



ॐ HINDUISM IN BRIEF

Hinduism, considered by some to be the oldest religion in the world, is a philosophy of life without a central belief (Das, 2014a; Morgan, 2001). It evolved in the Indus River Valley c. 6500 BCE and spread throughout Northern India in the 1500s BCE as an oral tradition until the writing of the Vedic scriptures some 600 years later. In addition to a series of texts on yogas and temple-building, existential questions, such as the very meaning of life, are addressed in *The Upanishads*.

No words exist in any Indian language for religion, whose Latin root means “to bind.” Hinduism views all search for divine truth as valid (Morgan, 2001).

The *Mahabharata* is the longest poem in history, with more than 200,000 lines of Hindu myths and philosophical discussions (Mahabharata, 2016). Within this poem is the *Bhagavad Gita*, in which the God Krisna, an avatar of Vishnu, and his chariot driver Arjuna discuss war, virtue, life, and death on the eve of a great battle. Another avatar of Vishnu is the focus of the epic tale *Ramayana*, which details the kidnapping and rescue of Ram’s wife, Sita (Ramayana, 2016). Their triumphant return to India is the basis for the important Hindu festival of Diwali, which celebrates good over evil, signals the time of returning to the inner light within ourselves, and honors the Goddess of Prosperity.

Hinduism is a term that reflects a diverse set of common spiritual practices centered on the basic beliefs of dharma, karma, reincarnation, and a monotheistic divinity (Embree, 1972; Hopkins, 1971; Zimmer, 1951). Dharma is spiritual law based upon natural justice, harmony, and

compassion. Living by these guidelines will create good karma, which is the result of action and reaction. Karma is the cause and effect of the choices we are free to make and the consequences meted out by the Universe. There is no hell or damnation. Hindus reach for a spiritual summit through cycles of reincarnation, and karma not only determines the experience of this lifetime, but also affects the next birth. Hindus cremate the dead to enable the soul’s release for its evolution.

Hindus believe in one Divinity, with multiple Gods and Goddesses representing major and minor aspects of the Supreme Deity (Morgan, 2001). There is a major trinity: Brahma the Creator and his consort Sarasvati, the Goddess of learning and the creative arts; Vishnu the Preserver and his consort Lakshmi, the Goddess of Prosperity; and Siva the Destroyer and his consort Parvati, the benign Mother Goddess who can become the fearless and fearsome Durga or the terrifying redeemer Kali ([see related article](#)).

The three major Hindu denominations are Shaivism, the belief that Siva is the Supreme Being; Vaishnavism, the worship of Vishnu or one of his avatars, principally Ram or Krisna; and Shaktism, the primary worship of the Divine Mother. In addition to the wide-ranging Hindu sects and practices of over a billion people (15 percent of the world’s population) living in the subcontinent of India and throughout the world (Hinduism by Country, 2016), Vedic culture also developed Jainism in 500 BCE and Buddhism in 400 BCE as distinct religious movements for reaching enlightenment.



DRUIDRY AND THE YAMAS

BY MARIA EDE-WEAVING

One of the joys of Druidry, particularly the kind that is practiced within OBOD, is that it allows room to explore the approaches of other paths. Many within OBOD blend their Druidry with other practices; Christians and Wiccans have found a home here and, through OBOD's involvement with the One Tree Gatherings held now in the United Kingdom, fruitful links with the Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist communities have been forged in a spirit of celebrating all that connects these paths rather than the things that divide them.

While for many Druidry as a single path is complete in itself, for others, hybrid spiritual practices enrich their understanding of self and life, and this, to me, is a positive expression of Druidry's inherent openness and inclusivity—something of which to be immensely proud. There is room for all, and the knowledge gained and shared through the many experiences of these myriad individual paths can only enrich the understanding of Druidry for everyone.

My path has many influences. I came to Druidry via Wicca, but I have also practiced yoga for many years and, of late, have been deepening my practice through yoga teacher training. This has required me to explore more deeply the philosophy of yoga, and it has been interesting to discover how much of this has a great deal in common with Druidry.

For many in the West, when we speak of yoga, most immediately think of the postures, or *asana*, but the *Eight Limbs of Yoga* detailed in Hindu texts are interconnected spiritual practices and

approaches of which the *asana* are only one part. One of the branches of yoga that I have been exploring in-depth of late are the *Yamas*—guiding principles that deal with the way we interact with others and the world—and I have been delighted by how much these resonate with a Druidic approach.

There are five *Yamas*:

- ॐ *Ahimsa*: Do no harm
- ॐ *Satya*: Truthfulness
- ॐ *Asteya*: Non-stealing in action, speech, and thought

© Jack Amott



Maria Ede-Weaving



ॐ *Aparigraha*: Non-possessiveness and non-attachment

ॐ *Brahmacharya*: Celibacy

The *Yamas* are not viewed as commandments, but rather as approaches that enable us to live with a greater self-awareness, peace, and contentment. For example, some followers of the *Yamas* in Western society change the concept of *Brahmacharya* from celibacy to moderation in behavior to fit their lifestyle choices.

In both Druidry and yoga, there is an understanding that all things contain a spark of the Divine, that all life is interconnected, and that because of this we strive to do as little harm as possible. In Druidry, showing compassion and wishing to protect and honor all life forms is rooted in the recognition of this underlying unity of creation. *Ahimsa* encourages us to express compassion and to act with care and consideration for both self and others—this not only works on a personal level in our relationships with ourselves and with those close to us, but also in our desire to protect our planet and build sustainable and supportive communities.

Druidry also places great importance on truth and fairness. The second *Yama*, *Satya*, encourages us to examine how we live with integrity: being honest with ourselves and others; recognising the power of words to both heal and harm and, therefore, choosing our words with care; and knowing when to stay silent and when to speak. These each have resonance in the practice of Druidry and

relate to Druidic notions of justice.

The third *Yama*, *Asteya*, asks that we do not steal. This refers not only to the possessions of others, but also to their time and energies. To take what is not freely given is an abuse and might be a symptom of a perceived lack in ourselves. Coveting what others have suggests that we feel that what we have is not enough, that we are not good enough in ourselves and are seeking externals to fill a void. *Asteya* asks that we stay connected to our gratitude and recognise all that we have—not only our material blessings, but also those of spirit too; it requires a willingness to exchange our energies, to receive and to willingly give. This open generosity is key to Druidry's attitude towards how we manage our own resources as well as the resources of our planet. Druidry opens us to the abundance of life and shows us that 'getting and striving' can lead to terrible imbalances within our own lives and personalities, and it can also result in disturbing the balance of the natural world and our support systems.

Aparigraha is also very relevant to Druidry's views on the use of resources. It encourages us to let go of our attachments and asks us, 'What is it that we truly need?' We can so often confuse our needs with our wants. *Aparigraha* asks that we become aware of our need to consume and questions what is driving this. It challenges mindless consumption and our defining ourselves solely by what we have or even by what we have achieved. It asks, 'What is the self be-



yond these limiting definitions?’ and ‘How does my need to consume impact on others and on my own happiness?’

In Druidry, we understand that life is constantly subject to change, that we must build a healthy relationship with change, and learning to let go is an important element in this process. *Aparigraha* encourages us to build trust in life to provide and warns not to hold on too tightly to things, people, or experiences out of a fear of loss, or a sense that we possess a bottomless void that nothing will fill. Imbalance ripples out from our personal lives to that of our communities: Our planet just can’t sustain our current level of consumption.

Druidry also recognizes that how we choose to express our energies in the world, both sexual and other, impacts far beyond the self. Energy is a sacred force to be used destructively or for good. When we learn to recognize the nature of our own energy and develop a greater awareness as to how we use it, we can potentially become a more positive force for good in the world. *Brahmacharya* teaches moderation and asks us to become aware of where we place our energy and if we are expending it in ways that serve our greater good. Druidry also explores ways in which to consciously direct our energies, investing it wisely.

I have only skimmed the surface of both philosophies. I suspect I could spend a whole lifetime discovering new layers of understanding in the *Yamas* just as I could with Druidic approaches. However, even a short exploration of these paths

© Remu K. Aldrich



serves to illustrate how each might enrich the other. I am cheered by this as it speaks to me about something fundamental in my spiritual search: It is in the living of life that we gain wisdom and in the living and the sharing of that wisdom that we are given the opportunity to find the best way through the complexities and difficulties that being human can bring us.

This brings us neatly back to *Ahimsa* because the compassion we develop for ourselves and others in our struggles to learn and grow is the true treasure of any spiritual journey, regardless of the path we choose to follow.

A version of this article was previously published on the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids [web site](#).

Maria Ede-Weaving has been a member of the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids for 13 years. She lives with her partner next to the sea on the south coast of England, where she writes, sings, practices Druidry, practices yoga, and explores the magical healing of the mineral and stone kingdom.



THE WILD CAULDRON DRUIDRY AND THE DIVINE FEMININE BETWEEN EAST & WEST

BY RACE MOCHRIDHE



A short walk from my apartment lies a marsh where I take my son to watch birds. The path is rambling, running between the backs of houses and the trunks of great crescent-limbed maples and oaks whose pavement-buckling roots reach out toward the homes with the focused will of a mother bringing a child in for dinner. In one garden is a short cement pillar atop which, like some stylite saint, there sleeps a fairy, sculpted as a girl of six or seven. Her face, though grey and stony, is still youthful, resplendent with kindnesses unwasted on the hurry of the waking.

To the house's owner, I surmise, she is only a bit of charming decoration. To me she is a symbol of real creatures. She is equally revealing either way. The gardener's expectations of the garden and my expectations of fairies are both expressed here: youth, life, serenity, grace, beauty, harmony. It means something that these qualities are what we expect, and it means something that the form that seems natural to us as their embodiment is female.

Medieval Druids did not have the same expectations; their gardens were wilder and more practical, with their fairies responsible for everything from missing socks to missing children. The ancient fae were intimate with the realm of the dead, and visions of them marching to war were as common as visions of

them dancing. They were as likely to have non-human forms as human ones, and as likely to be male as female.

The sweet little stone fairy in my neighbor's garden is, at many generations' remove, their descendent, but she is more directly the child of Victorian imagination. The Victorians rediscovered, in Druidry and elsewhere, whole realms of human experience largely dormant during the excesses of the Reformation and the cynical fatigue of the Enlightenment. For the first time in almost 400 years, divination, magick, visions of spirits, conversation with the dead, and oneness with God were not necessarily heresies to be extirpated, nor sorceries to be feared, nor lunacies to be cured. Increasingly they were seen, even by many ordinary people, as natural possibilities of the human mind and soul. The beings that helped to expand the mind and soul, from fairies to angels, became almost ubiquitously female in the Victorian period and generally remain so today.

Mary and Brigid

The Victorians saw spiritual growth as feminine partly because of their idealization of medieval Britain. During the middle ages, the Holy Spirit was regularly depicted as feminine, and the mediation of Her [!] grace to individual sinners had been the role of the Blessed



Virgin. The connection between the Holy Spirit inspiring the believer and Mary interceding for them was close, and the lines between the two often blurred. Medieval preachers invoked Mary when asking for the gifts of the Spirit, and San Bernardino of Siena proclaimed that, "no creature receives any grace of virtue from God except according to the dispensation of the Virgin Mother..." (Ellington, 2001, p. 129). In Wales particularly, this concept was elaborated at levels of depth and viscosity undreamt of in the rest of Europe. Mary's pregnancy and breastfeeding were treated by Welsh poets in astounding detail, a favorite observation being that, per the doctrines of medieval medicine, it was Mary's blood that had been taken up by the fetus and was thus subsequently shed

on the Cross, and Mary's flesh (following Aristotle's belief that the woman's body provided the physical material of the child) that was given out at the Supper (Cartwright, 2008).

This physicality was very important to Mary's reception in Celtic cultures. Irish bards, for example, frequently used

pregnancy as a metaphor for poetry. The cauldron of inspiration in the (usually male) poet's subtle body was analogized to the uterus, including such curiosities as the medieval physicians' belief that that organ could move freely around the body (Mulligan, 2009). Connections like these

helped to transform the goddess Brigid, who had been responsible for bestowing poetic inspiration on the worthy in Pagan times, into St. Brigid, who in turn took the epithet "Mary of the Gaels."

Welsh bards, too, connected poetic inspiration, or Awen, to Christian concepts of divinity, mainly by equating it with the Holy Spirit. The 12th century historian Giraldus Cambrensis (1978) described Awen illuminating people with "the spirit of God" (p. 246ff), and the 15th century bard Llywelyn ap Moel's conviction

that Awen came from the Holy Spirit was enshrined in the standard Bardic grammar books (Davies, 1999). Nineteenth century leaders of the Revival likewise proclaimed Awen to come from the Holy Spirit and often spoke of it in phrases taken directly from the New Testament (Franklin, 1997).

As in Ireland, Mary was a key to



Stained glass window of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the parish center, St. Brigid of Kildare

this process, owing to her traditional association with the Spirit. Llywelyn, for example, equated the word “Awen” to the three letters of the *ave* (hail) spoken to Mary at the Annunciation (Davies, 1999, p. 23). At the same time, by locating the origin of Awen in the time of Adam and the Creation, he created implicit parallels with the feminine figure of Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs. The Bards thus used the grammatical femininity both of “Spirit” (*ruach*) and “Wisdom” (*chokhmah*) in Hebrew and of “Awen” in Welsh, connecting all three through Mary.

The complicating factor in Wales was that, while the Irish had simply linked Brigid to Mary, Wales had a second figure associated with Awen—Cerridwen. At times, she was reconcilable to Christian thought, as when the 12th century poet Llywarch ap Llywelyn boldly asserted that “The Lord God will give me the sweet Awen, as from the cauldron of Cerridwen.” We must remember, though, that Wales was also the only place in Europe where Mary could be invoked to curse one’s enemies (Cartwright, 2008). When Mary appeared

in her more usual, gentle depictions, Cerridwen’s symbolism tended to work against hers. Mary, for instance, was always associated with the dove, but Bards often converted this into a hawk, like the poet Henry Vaughan did when he described his receipt of Awen as a hawk flying into his body (Martin, 1957).

This was because Cerridwen became a hawk in her pursuit of Gwion

after he had inadvertently stolen the three drops of Awen. That story, featuring a rapacious chase and an attempted murder, illustrates the difficulty that faced the Revival Druids. In the resuscitation of Bardic teaching as a whole system of spirituality, the Marian/Holy Spirit associations once used to justify it could tell only half the story. Brigid’s Awen fit the gentle, benedictive path that



Lithograph depicting Goddess Kali draped with a necklace of skulls and standing on Shiva amid the demons she has killed. Brahma, Vishnu, and another observe from the clouds.

medieval visionaries called the “White Ladder of Mary,” but Cerridwen’s more visceral Awen had no home on the manicured parish fields of Christian England. It belonged to the primal forest and was itself, as those woods had been, “red in tooth and claw” (Tennyson, 1895, canto LVI). This was a redness too raw for even

the more judgmental and perilous “Red Ladder of Christ”; it was of a different order entirely—an undisguisably Pagan one—and Victorian society had little to work with in interpreting it.

Cerridwen and Kali

Victoria’s empire, however, brought an unexpected tool. For a century, the linguistic connection between Europe and India had been known, but it was only

during her reign that the mythological connections became clear and the average European learned enough of Indian religion to make those connections meaningful. Already holding an Indo-European spiritual legacy from pre-Christian times preserved, in large part, through Mary, the Revivalists found a living link to that lost past—one which offered figures who resonated with the untamed nature of Cerridwen.



GODDESS KALI



The Hindu Goddess Kali is a much more complex figure than the Victorians took her for. It was her wild, transgressive, sexually charged face that most scandalized British administrators and thrilled British counterculture, but in India, she was also the ideal homemaker and mother in her form as Lord Shiva’s wife, Parvati, as well as the noble defender of goodness in her form as Sri Durga (Kinsley, 1988).

The most famous story about her tells how the world was overrun by the demon Raktabija, whom the Gods could not defeat because he cloned himself from every drop of his spilt blood (Kinsley, 1997). The Gods called upon Durga to save them, but even she could not overcome the demon until, as a last resort, she assumed the form of Kali in her All-Devouring Time persona and consumed him whole. As Kali, however, she was so overcome with bloodlust that she threatened to destroy all of creation. Lord Shiva threw himself beneath her feet to absorb the fury of her dance and she, realizing that she had tread upon her own husband, stuck out her tongue in shame and was pacified. This icon, known as Dakshina Kali, is one of the most common in India.

For all her fierceness, however, Kali is also worshipped as a loving mother by those who see her as the embodiment of the Supreme Reality and thus as the origin of all things. Her most famous devotee in this form was probably the sage Ramakrishna, who played an instrumental role in bringing Hinduism to the West at the end of the 19th century, and who helped to make Kali one of the most recognized Hindu deities in western countries (Isherwood, 1980). Today, Kali is worshipped around the world as a symbol of solace, wholeness, and enlightenment, but also of sexuality, empowerment, and self-definition (McDermott, 1996).



It was on Midsummer Eve 1878 that the third Archdruid of Britain, Myfyr Morganwg, became the first Vedic Druid. His predecessors had drawn on Hindu ideas in their restoration of Druidry and it had become fashionable in Britain to claim that Druidry and “Brahmanism” were the same religion, or that Stonehenge was an ancient Buddhist temple (Hutton, 2009). Myfyr, however, actually invoked the Hindu Goddess Kali in front of an audience that still remembered Britain’s campaign to exterminate her cult, associated by British authorities with banditry and human sacrifice.

Kali was, for many, a symbol of all that was un-British—the representative of the feared, despised, and desired *otherness* of all Asian culture (Humes, 2003; Urban, 2003). That was exactly what made her perfect for Myfyr. Kali, whose sovereignty over all-devouring time is symbolized by her garland of human heads, her skirt of severed arms, and her lolling, bloody tongue, hearkened back in the English imagination to the mists of prehistory—mists with which Druids themselves, not infrequently accused of human sacrifice by Victorian scholars, were associated. It was her very appearance of primitivism that made her a touchstone for recovering the secrets of Cerridwen’s often violent and unabashedly sexual image. Kali’s appeal to 19th century Druidry was part of its rediscovery of what was lost within itself.

And the truth, of course, was that the era as a whole cried out for

her. Though its own cultural resources were largely half-images of women as prostitutes and saints, everything from Romantic poetry to Pre-Raphaelite painting betrayed the Victorian world’s longing to reconnect with the feminine in a whole and authentic way. Even as Kali provided the missing pole of divine experience for the Druids, allowing them to put all that Cerridwen represented into context, so Revival Druidry and broader Neopaganism became, for European culture more generally, the bridge between Marian traditions that preserved pre-Christian images of the divine feminine and Hindu traditions that imported kindred images from the same ancient source.

The Goddess of 10,000 Names

From Myfyr’s countercultural gesture emerged cultural forces that today bring Pagans, Hindus, and Catholics together in an exploration of divine femininity. The poetry of Octavio Paz identifies the Virgin of Guadalupe with Kali (Bhattacharya, 1998). Hindus in Trinidad worship Mary as a face of Kali (Case, 2001). Catholic priest John Dupuche and Jesuit scholar Francis Clooney use Kali “for fresh reflection on the meaning of God in light of the meaning of goddess” (Clooney, 2005, p. 9). Through the intervention of Victorian Druids, the Victorian penchant for the dainty and feminine—preserved still in our garden fairies and greeting card angels—was transformed into a rediscovery of the powerful and feminine,



in which the tension between Mary and Kali, between Brigid and Cerridwen, is opening us once again to the full possibilities of the human mind and soul.

References

- Bhattacharya, M. (Spring, 1998). Echoes of India: The poems of Octavio Paz. *India International Centre Quarterly* 25.1, 1–19.
- British Druid Order. (November 24, 2015). Awen – The Holy Spirit of Druidry [web page]. Retrieved from <http://www.druidry.co.uk/what-is-druidry/awen-the-holy-spirit-of-druidry/>
- Cartwright, J. (2008). *Feminine sanctity and spirituality in Medieval Wales*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.
- Case, F. I. (2001). The intersemiotics of Obeah and Kali Mai in Guyana. In Patrick Taylor (Ed.), *Nation dance: Religion, identity, and cultural difference in the Caribbean* (40–53). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Clooney, F. X. (2005). *Divine Mother, Blessed Mother: Hindu Goddesses and the Virgin Mary*. Oxford University Press.
- Davies, O. (1999). Rhetoric of the gift: Inspiration, pneumatology and poetic craft in Medieval Wales. In Marion Glasscoe (Ed.), *The medieval mystical tradition: England, Ireland, and Wales* (21–32). Cambridge: D.S. Brewer.
- Dupuche, J. R. (2012). The Goddess Kali and the Virgin Mary. *Australian eJournal of Theology* 19.1, 1–15.
- Ellington, D. S. (2001). *From sacred body to angelic soul: Understanding Mary in late Medieval and early modern Europe*. Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press.
- Franklin, W. N., Jr. (1997). *Awen, barddas, and the age of Blake* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of North Texas.
- Giraldus Cambrensis. (1978). *Description of Wales*. Trans. Lewis Thorpe. Penguin Books.
- Hutton, R. (2009). *Blood and mistletoe: The history of the Druids in Britain*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Humes, C. A. (2003). Wrestling with Kali: South Asian and British constructions of the Dark Goddess. In Rachel Fell McDermott and Jeffrey John Kripal (Eds.), *Encountering Kali: In the margins, at the center, in the West* (145–168). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Isherwood, C. (1980 reprint, original 1965). *Ramakrishna and his disciples*. Hollywood: Vedanta Press.
- Kinsley, D. (1988). *Hindu goddesses: Visions of the divine feminine in the Hindu religious tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kinsley, D. (1997). *Tantric visions of the divine feminine: The ten Mahavidyas*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Martin, L. C. (Ed.). (1957). *The works of Henry Vaughan*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon.
- McDermott, R. F. (1996). The western Kali. In John Stratton Hawley and Donna Marie Wulff (Eds.), *Devi: Goddesses of India* (281–305). Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.
- Mulligan, A. C. (October, 2009) 'The satire of the poet is a pregnancy': Pregnant poets, body metaphors, and cultural production in Medieval Ireland. *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 108.4, 481–505.
- Tennyson, A. (1895). *In memoriam*. William J. Rolfe (Ed.). Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co.
- Urban, H. B. (2003). India's darkest heart: Kali in the colonial imagination. In Rachel Fell McDermott and Jeffrey John Kripal (Eds.), *Encountering Kali: In the margins, at the center, in the West* (169–195). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Race MoChridhe is a Bard in the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids as well as a Dedicant in Ár nDraíocht Féin. He explores the intersection of Pagan and Abrahamic spiritualities, among other topics, in his blog, [Nemeton at the Sorbonne](#).



SUCCESSION PLANNING

BY ABARIS



Do we have a weakness? Do we have a challenge for the future? Will there be a problem? The answer is yes, but not for a long time. Something that is the devil or the hounds of Annwn for any druid order is succession. We have had four magnificent, charismatic chosen chiefs through the line of succession from the Edwardian period, in the order that gave birth to OBOD, and not once, in that time, has it been possible to pass on the succession from one chief to the other smoothly and directly. Every time, there has been a civil war or a temporary collapse of the order. I don't think it will in the future, not least because, looking at Philip, I assume you have plenty of time on your hands! (Hutton, 2014)

I went to the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids in Glastonbury in 2014. The celebration marked so many highlights, successes, and accomplishments, but in OBOD's spirit of truthfulness, one subject came up that resonated with me. I don't know how many really heard it among the cheers and applause, but it struck a chord in me and, after seeing the video of the 50th, I'm ready to address it: The ugly problem of succession.

Whether it is a family, a spiritual

group, or a martial arts lineage, history is not favorable to a smooth, agreed upon, transition. The battles today between Sunni Muslims and Shia Muslims are from a dispute over succession 1,500 years ago! Having seen first-hand three separate, what I would call, divisive and un-successful, transfers of authority, I would like to weigh in on the subject.

In martial arts, the title "grandmaster" is used so frequently that its original meaning seems lost. Being the grandmaster has nothing to do with how many years you have practiced or how many schools you own. There is only one grandmaster, and they are the head of that style's lineage. The grandmaster sets the standard for the style's curriculum and training. They are the final authority for changes and innovations. A grandmaster is chosen for their knowledge, ability, and leadership. Not all grandmasters are champions, and not all champions are grandmasters. Chinese martial arts always looks at the sum total of a style's history and lineage and does not judge by one practitioner or master, but by generations of practitioners.

One of my teachers, who *is* a world champion fighter, was chosen by his master to lead their style. My teacher has a calligraphy giving him leadership and an official photo to document the transition. As soon as his teacher died, killed tragically in a motorcycle accident in



Hong Kong, the other students of the style said that my teacher's succession is a fake and that they have similar calligraphies. My teacher said two things: Produce your calligraphy and call me a fake to my face.

As I always say, the pen is mightier than the sword, unless writer and fencer are standing face to face!

Another example is the succession of my Sufi Order. While alive, the grandshaykh, who had a clear succession himself, taught and traveled and waited to designate the next grandshaykh. At the end of his life, he chose his son, and it was filmed and distributed on YouTube. Still, after he died, there was much dissent and people saying that the grandshaykh had made a mistake, or that they were chosen, or that the previous grandshaykh made a mistake! The dispute is raging and the whole Sufi Order suffers. Ego has raised its ugly head, and it is really sad to me.

My own story, though not as grand, is filled with people claiming I never passed a formal ceremony with my teacher or that my calligraphy is fake. One of my classmates told a story that I forced my teacher to write my discipleship calligraphy in the airport! Have you ever tried to do calligraphy? It's messy! Plus, how can I force my teacher, or anybody, to do anything? Not to mention his son witnessed the writing of my disciple calligraphy in Tampa. When the time comes for me to retire, I will make sure that *if* I have a successor at the Studio, all will know. And if I don't designate a successor, all will know that as well.

So now I come to OBOD. Let me say

that the question of succession is clear when there is no power, glory, or prestige. When Philip Carr-Gomm was asked to lead the Order, what was going on then? Very, very little compared to today. Lots of work, organization, and the momentous task of creating the home study course that has changed thousands of lives, mine included. There was no glamor being "Chosen Chief" back then. Who wants to lead when the leadership role is filled with work, worry, and stress? So many years of planting were needed before the crop started to look good!

It's different today. The Order is up and running and has amazing momentum. Philip, his wife Stephanie, and Damh the Bard may they have long life, good health, look good for decades to come. But, there is still the question of who leads next. How does the Order choose? What if there is dissension? Rivals for the leadership role? Challenges to choices? Can our Order survive?

Enough of that!

First, let me say, I have full confidence in OBOD. The Order is so much bigger and magically empowered than humanly possible. When the time comes, I believe the Order will have a succession that works for all of us, just like the Order works for us now, just like the gwersi works for all of us, and the Office works for all of us, and the website works for all of us, and the...

Also, I would point to the leadership we now have, and say that we have been fairly "spiritually drama-less" for 50 years! We have the kind of leadership that



brought us here; one that lets us be our own guide and conscience. And one that encourages and teaches with a keen eye to our own wisdom and experience. A standard has been set as Philip elaborated on during the East Coast Gathering in 2012:

Leadership works when we get out of the way. I see my role as supporting the Order in where it wants to go, rather than telling it where to go. In other words, I see myself as 'beneath' the membership acting in this supporting role, rather than 'above' it in some way. (Carr-Gomm, 2012)

If I were to suggest a way to make a smooth transition, I would say that the next chosen chief needs to be decided somehow, maybe by election, before the current chosen chief retires or moves on. Then the current chief could begin the transition so there is no doubt that the next chief has the blessings and confidence of the present chief. And

of course, with all the great "Rites of Passage, Initiations, and Celebrations of Cycles, Renewal, and Change," I'm sure the Order will come up with a meaningful and powerful ritual of succession for a chosen chief!

So where to begin? I asked Philip, and he wrote:

The suggestion you make in your last paragraph is exactly the solution we've come up with (with me choosing the person unless unable to do so, in which case an election process has been developed) and when the time is right we will announce the successor and I will work with them over an extended period to ensure a stable transition... Ronald Hutton, in his Golden Anniversary talk (Touchstone's September Issue 212) pointed to the trajectory that previous Druid groups seem to have taken, from the radical to the staid. He then went on to say that he saw no danger of this occurring in OBOD. (Carr-Gomm, personal communication, 2015)

Can you hear my big sigh of relief??

Abaris has explored many Eastern religions, focusing on Taoism and Sufism. He has also studied hypnotherapy, psychology, and is certified in the Healing Tao System. For the last 11 years, he has made extensive research and study concerning the Western Mysteries, including alchemy, Freemasonry, the Knights Templar, the Rosicrucians, Druidry, Celtic history, and Rosslyn Chapel. Abaris is a Druid and mentor for the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids.

© Anne Hammond-Tooke



A TALK WITH NEW AODA ARCHDRUID GORDON COOPER

BY RENU K. ALDRICH

The Ancient Order of Druids (AODA) has a new archdruid, its eighth since its founding in 1912. John Michael Greer resigned in late December as the head of the order, and longtime member and scholar Gordon Cooper has stepped into the role. I sat down virtually with Cooper to talk about the transition and the changes ahead.

Renu: Was John Michael Greer's resignation as archdruid expected?

Gordon: No, his stepping down was not expected by the membership. He'd been thinking about it for a while—12 to 13 years was a long time to spend building up a group that was comprised of fairly elderly members doing a handful of rituals into an organization with 900 members, a website, and a magazine. Honestly, when I was approached about taking on the role of archdruid, I blinked more than a few times to make sure I was reading it correctly. John Michael is right, I think, in that organizations are healthier when its leaders don't make it into a permanent life. He is most emphatically continuing as a member, as a voice on the Grand Grove, and certainly as an author and advisor. I am fortunate to count him and [his wife] Sara as good friends. Samhuinn/ Winter is as good a time as any to effect a change, as it is usually devoid of events or other duties that would make a

© Gordon Cooper



Cooper at OBOD Lughnasadh Camp in 1998 on top of the Vale of the White Horse of Uffington

transition difficult.

Renu: Tell us a little bit about what you plan to do in your new role and what will remain the same.

Gordon: As John Michael and I have somewhat different skill sets and backgrounds, I will draw most new innovations I make from either suggestions from members and others, my own experiences, and the needs of AODA as it develops.

For what it is worth, we both share a background in Hoodoo, [Independent Order of Odd Fellows] Lodge work, the Or-



der of Bards, Ovates & Druids (OBOD), and esoteric history as “dumpster divers into obscure (now) events and resources.” We differ in martial arts backgrounds (mine is mainly in Fut Ga, also known as Buddha Hand). My formal degree work is in anthropology and

the Turkish language with a minor in natural sciences. My mentor at the University of Texas at El Paso was David Eyde, a structural anthropologist somewhat famous for being the last Westerner to successfully live with a tribe of headhunters in New Guinea. I have had experience as an office manager, developed training programs for state agencies in Washington, D.C. twice, produced A/V training materials over a period of 20 years, and spent over 30 years as an author in the NeoPagan and magical communities.

Initiations and rituals as core shall stay the same. Our neither Pagan nor not-Pagan stance on religious identity continues to be quite useful and is something we certainly don’t want to change. There will be an expansion in materials and med-

© Gordon Cooper



Gordon Cooper spending Samhuinn with Philip and Stephanie Carr-Gomm and their daughters in the mid-1990s

itations available in the next year or so. I’ve had a series in development for well over a decade that derives from Spiritualism and 19th century Magnetic Healing that should be avail-

able by the end of 2016.

Renu: What do you feel are the most important goals for AODA and Druidry in general at this time in our history?

Gordon: It is far too early from an historical viewpoint to determine now what will be most important for the United States or other Druid communities. My hope is to connect people with tools, resources, and skills that will allow them to develop druidries based around their own locales and needs.

The Americas differ greatly from the United Kingdom or Europe in that we are far more spread out. The economic crunch, regardless of currently cheap gasoline and aviation fuel, means that most people will not be able to afford the time or



resources to attend events half a continent away. With that realization, I hope to help develop more local groups, probably smaller than what are now considered groves. Luckily, I don't have to re-invent the wheel: There are several well-proven models for smaller developing groups of like minded folks that I'll be introducing into AODA and the community overall as options for people who simply don't have AODA members around them, but do have people with an interest in Druidry and what it can bring to their lives. The development of truly rich regional and local druidries shall be the work of decades and centuries, not months and years.

Corby Ingold, a remarkable Druid, ritual drummer, ceremonialist and musician who "passed into starlight" in October, had long discussions with me around this topic over the course of almost 30 years. Corby felt that the Neopagan community had entirely missed the boat when it failed to engage with the musical communities and other groups that held very similar spiritual views, many of them coming out of the folk revival as exemplified by Woody

Guthrie, Alan Lomax's collection work, Odetta, etc. [Episode 39 of Pete Seeger's 1965 Public Television series "Rainbow Quest"](#) with Johnny Cash and June Carter-Cash speaks eloquently to this.

I hope to bring a greater awareness of the "Maker" and permaculture movements into Druids' lives, along with the homemade or Front Porch music movement. Without folks dropping broom handles through cigar boxes and stringing them with the high tensile steel broom wire, there wouldn't be Delta Blues, Rockabilly, or probably rock and roll. I would like it very much

if music, dance, crafts, and re-purposed electronics and machinery (done safely and within the confines of common sense) became common in the Druid communities.

Renu: How did you come to Druidry?

Gordon: I self-identified as someone who wanted the skill sets of a Druid, while fully recognizing the bulk of those were lost, circa 1978. Gwyddion P. was known as a Druid—not just a Bard, but a Druid. He spoke some Welsh and was really cutting edge for that era. I accepted and used

© Gordon Cooper



The beach at West Seattle Ferry Terminal



the term “Druid” as a self-identification after my first OBOD Lughnasadh Camp in 1998 on top of the Vale of the White Horse of Uffington.

I had started reading on magic, specifically New Orleans “Voodoo” as a child. In the U.S. military at age 18 on Autumnal Equinox in 1976, I met my first magical teacher, who still counts as a good friend. There were quite a few magicians in the military intelligence community at that time, and I suspect this long tradition continues. I was in the Navy from 1976–1980, though at my duty station in Rota, Spain I worked for many other agencies. I was an intelligence analyst, the first certified field operator of the Tomahawk Fire Control System for Surface Ships (Outlaw Shark), and became a conditional pacifist around this time. Proximity to Africa allowed me to spend my off duty hours listening to African and Middle Eastern music. I studied witchcraft at this time as well.

College, as I said earlier, was at UT El Paso, a magnificent, mountain setting with Nepalese and Bhutanese architectural buildings on campus. I had to drop out my last year due to an auto accident, which crushed an awful lot of muscles in a leg and gave me pneumonia and broken and bruised ribs. I moved to Los Angeles for several years, worked as a political organizer for the California League of Conservation Voters, an office manager for Whole Life Monthly, and then front office staffer for a large printing

firm. Moving to Seattle in 1988 after a divorce saw me coming to a third home, after the Kansas of my childhood and the Desert Southwest around El Paso. The emerging PODSnet, GENie, Delphi and other online data services that pre-dated the Internet 2.0 led to the development of the Celtic Un-Course with my spouse, Erynn Laurie. The “Hedge School” videotapes followed shortly thereafter along with The Cauldron of Poesy lectures and book. The contentious “Red God” article¹ that I co-wrote with John Michael Greer for *Gnosis* magazine demonstrated that even a new religious community could develop rigid fundamentalism, which I found very sad.

My service-connected PTSD was finally recognized and I began treatment just around 9/11. Unfortunately, 9/11 paralleled far too many things I’d seen while in the Navy, and I had several hospitalizations thereafter, and my marriage ended. It helps to remember that the term “Druidry” was certainly not common in North America prior to OBOD’s revival on the material plane. We met [OBOD Chosen Chief] Philip Carr-Gomm almost by accident while he was touring the United States in the early-to-middle 1990s. He was delightful, and a year or so later we got him, his wife Stephanie, and their two daughters over for a Samhuinn festival. In my mind, that was the first public event, certainly in the Northwest, that used three realms and other features out of Irish paradigms. When I first visited the United Kingdom in 1998,



I was utterly dumbfounded. I saw a level of artistic and magical creativity in OBOD and elsewhere that far exceeded anything commonly seen in the United States at that time.

I freely admit to a desire to transplant this Awen to the United States and localize it. At this point, I was willing to consider myself a Druid. The early 2000s saw my move to Bremerton, Washington due to its much cleaner air and lower stress level. I travelled to the United Kingdom frequently

through the mid 2000s and began working with John Michael and Sara Greer prior to the re-establishing of the AODA. Since that time, I've joined, written a fair amount of material in blog posts, hosted some workshops, and spent time with my intentional family in Bremerton, working on our gardens, continuing my studies in Fut Ga, and continuing to researching the amazing and deep connections between

physical culture, Delsarte, Spiritualism, and magic in the Americas and Europe. I began this study as an adjunct to the "Red God" article research in the early 1990s, and I discovered that the bulk of

the self-identified magical community held—and probably still holds—what I think of as "an esoteric allergy to matter." People would look at me and say, "So what does invocatory ritual posing, reciting poetry around deities and dancing have to do with magic? That sounds like 'lower plane' stuff. Besides the body is icky." Many/

most esotericists I've met have dismissed strength training muscle control and the like in the list of physical culture work as 'lower plane,' unimportant to a magical life—or life in general. Earlier generations of magicians emphatically disagreed with the modern notion of exercise.²

I got my amateur radio license, General Class around my 50th birthday, and

© Gordon Cooper



This photo was taken in the Pasque flowers "Prairie Smoke" bloom short summer season in Wyoming, c. 1998, when Cooper was visiting with "Teton" Jack Langan, a beat poet, Lakota reservation raised Scotch/ Irish half or quarter native, a mountain man, a road man, and a host of other things. Camera: Rolleicord V, haze filter; Agfa Portra 160 film exposed at EI 80. Hand-held exposure.



am proudly registered with the FCC as KE7RYM. Two years ago, I accidentally discovered a telluric energy system either from or through Anton Mesmer that was published in the 1830s in a Universalist periodical in England. We reprinted the whole of the series in the first issue of our journal, *Trilithon*. I'll admit I have seen hints of similar systems still known in Continental Europe, but generally in folks interested in ultra-low frequency radio research. There's a very long history in the East and West of trying to equate magic with electricity or whatever form of energy is popular. Spiritualists built Tesla coils, etheric cameras, and the like over a century ago, and there is a segment of the esoteric community that continues in this vein though the current generation does not overlap very much with Druidry so far as I know. I'm willing to be shown differently.

If you need a short summation of how I generally approach the world, I follow

the advice of an Okinawan Martial Arts Master and World Class Go player: "Water that flows in a stream contends with nothing."

Blessings on all points of the clouds,

Gordon Cooper

Aka nwlora

Jacca an Drevas (Jack of the Field, or "Scarecrow" in Cornish)

Anyone interested in learning more about AODA, please visit their web site at <http://www.aoda.org>.

Notes

1. The article reference: Greer, J. M. & Cooper, G. (Summer 1998). The Red God: Woodcraft and the origins of Wicca. *Gnosis Magazine*, 48.
2. See "The Paleolithic Prescription" by Eaton, Shostak, & Konner (1988) for the physical anthropological baseline of "normal" human strength and compare it with "Super Strength" by Alan Calvert (2012) to discover that the standards for both are the same—as is classic, as opposed to modern training.

© Brom Hanks





THE FOREST I KNOW

BY FAUCON OF SAKIN'EL

It is easier by far to discern the presence of a special grove from a distance. The tip of a giant oak will finger above blued mist a bit higher there than anywhere else. Closer in you must ask the flowers which way to go. 'Tis said that all paths cross in a forest—or never do. It is not a matter of which path to follow, but of who you are in the morning. Is it a mystery how a decided path can swerve aside, soul diverted, beckoned by waving fern of special frond or mossy hunt for northern clue? Shadows hover in a tapestry of light that softens edges and obscures the true form of objects near the glen. Lost? Perhaps it is desirable to be lost here for a bit, sheltered some from noise and din—surely most of which comes from deep inside your head.

The important journey is never from here to there, nor from outside to within, but from confusion to clarity, known as cherish. Ah, you have arrived! No—say, “I am of the Grove!”

I think I must call out in verse, or sing a simple song, or whistle joined with hidden bird or breathing of the grass. But my dreams are heard, of that I'm sure, yet I know not by whom or how. Perhaps it is the rusty bark of the rough cedar I love to hug, or the laughing ripple of a stony brook, or the light from a patch of quiet leaves. Perhaps it is the shallow cave I have never cared to search or

the craggy stump resembling a bear. Or maybe it is the teaming life that surges beneath the needled floor or the furry smalls that pretend to hide. Who listens to me here? Who hears my prayers?

Know that it is in the shaded glyn 'neath scented pine that I pray unto the Father that his wisdom might unfold and reach out to touch the Goddess who is everywhere. I love that search, and the search is love, and the task an eternal play. I'd invite you here to search with me and call out in silent song, but the paths are but wide enough for one—though I can share, must share, this journey with you. Alone is never lonely in the forest of my prayers, and all who choose can be my brother or sister as an echo of this glade.

Find your grove and follow! I will lay down my head on a flowered bush where cloud kissed sunlight flickers in my hair and wait for your presence to call me back. I am, after all, a Bard—and stand on the shoulders of ancients and wear the cloak of Shining. I have a story to tell. I have a story to live!

faucun is protector of a primordial area known as Shernai with woods, stream, trails, deer, turkey, fox, and more. Limited guests share the glyn for spiritual inspiration, writing, song, and celebration in connection with North Carolina's [White Oak Grove](#), which is affiliated with the New Order of Druids.





PUBLIC RITUAL WORKSHOP, PART III: RITUAL THEORY

BY DAVID NORTH

Welcome to part three of the Public Ritual Workshop. By way of review, recall that in the last workshop segment we examined a possible set of ritual roles and how the characteristics of each complemented the others to create a well-rounded whole for expressing the spiritual myth. Prior to that, in the first issue we answered the questions of what a ritual is and what we are trying to achieve with two quotes. In the first, Joseph Campbell explained how ritual allows us to participate in the myth and find our own wisdom (Campbell & Toms, 2005, CD 1.). In the second, Isaac Bonewits noted that the same ritual could be either boring or electrifying depending on who was performing it (Bonewits, 2007, p. xvi). In this installment, we'll expand upon those ideas, taking a slightly-deeper look into the theory behind what we're trying to accomplish by performing ritual and how we get there.

John Michael Greer, in *The Druidry Handbook: Spiritual Practice Rooted*

in the *Living Earth* (2006), notes that the role of ritual has been historically controversial, with one extreme valuing "exact performance" and the other viewing all ritual as "empty formalism," but that these views overvalue and under-

value ritual, respectively. He suggests an alternate framework proposed by Ross Nichols, who said "ritual is poetry in the world of acts" (Greer, 2006, p.170). Nichols, who founded the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids

(OBOD) in 1964, is considered by many to be the 'father' of modern Druidism and was a colleague of Gerald Gardner—the founder of modern Wicca. In reviewing the thoughts of Campbell, Bonewits, Greer, and Nichols collectively, a common theme emerges: Power and meaning in ritual comes from participation, which includes both those watching and those performing. The art, then—the "poetry in motion" as I like to call it—lies in delivery; and the key to delivery is the skill, and understanding of nuance, that comes



Yule Log at Alban Arthan (2015)



only with repetitive practice and rehearsal.

However, before diving head-first into becoming a ritualist, please consider a cautionary note: The act of frequently rehearsing and performing rituals for others makes it difficult, and sometimes downright impossible, to have a personal spiritual experience. The consequences of this can be subtle at first, but there is a real risk of becoming spiritually jaded or indifferent, which—left unchecked—can lead to a crisis of faith. So, while providing a ritual experience for others is an act of service, and service and leadership can be valid forms of spiritual expression in their own right when occurring at the right time in one's development, performance should be delicately balanced with private spiritual practice—whether individually or with a group. Remember to be kind to yourself along the way: Take stock in your inner voice, and the voices of those around you, and step away for a while when it feels right or necessary.

Isaac Bonewits' book, *Neo Pagan Rites: A Guide to Creating Public Rituals that Work* (2007) is a wonderful look at the basic phases of rituals, which are surprisingly similar across most liturgical practices regardless of the religion in question. I will only summarize his five common ritual elements here ([see table](#)), but I highly recommend the book to those who desire a more in-depth study of the topic.

Note Bonewits' use of the term "mana" (supernatural and/ or spiritual energy) as a received gift in step three.

THE BASIC PHASES OF RITUAL

1. **Starting the Rite:** Including a clear beginning, consecrating time and space, and grounding/centering
2. **Defining the Ritual Center:** Evoking gatekeeper(s), and preliminary power raising
3. **The Major Gift of Mana:** Invocation of Deity(ies) and primary power raising
4. **Receiving and Using the Returned Power:** Group bonding and main spell casting or rite
5. **Ending the Ceremony:** Thanking the entities invoked or invited, affirmations of success, re-grounding, and de-consecrating time and space

This is a crucial concept to understand as this exchange of power is the underpinning of ritual, and even of worship in general. Bonewits calls it "the worship bargain" where worshipers give time, respect, and energy to a deity, spirit, or ancestor—whatever form that takes—in reciprocation for spiritual strength, inspiration, and validation (Bonewits, 2007, p. 18). Put in these terms, the concept of the worship bargain may not sit right with some; but consider that each of us hopes to use the energy from ritual to better our own life, the lives of those around us, or the earth system. So then, from whence does that inspiration come?



Ultimately, not all of the summoned power from a ritual gets absorbed and used by the recipients—some lingers, and hence the need for the “re-grounding” piece in step five. This is important: If you believe in the power of ritual enough to participate in the first place, regardless your perception of the source of that power, then also believe in the potential for unfocused energy to wander aimlessly and cause harm. Just as a warming fire left carelessly untended can rage out of control and have unintended consequences, residual spiritual fire must be focused for a greater good, or grounded back into the earth. This is responsible magic!

Then, after all is said and done, serve food and drink.

As a teaser, the next two chapters in the ritual workshop are titled Ritu-

al Body and Ritual Soul, respectively. During our discussion of ritual theory, we’ve transitioned to a new theme: delivery & style. It is on that theme that we’ll conclude. Until then...

References

- Bonewits, I. (2007). *NeoPagan rites: A guide to creating public rituals that work*. Woodbury, MN: Llewellyn Worldwide.
- Greer, J. M. (2006). *The Druidry handbook: Spiritual practice rooted in the living earth*. San Francisco, CA: Red Wheel/Wiser.
- Toms, M. (2005). *The wisdom of Joseph Campbell* [Audio CD, 1]. Carlsbad, CA: Hay House.

David North is an Ovate Grade member of the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids, and, with his wife Nicole, is a co-organizer of the Northern Virginia-based Seed Group of the Oak and Eagle. He participates with the public ritual team and authors or edits many of the group’s rituals.

JOIN THE DM TEAM!

We are looking for talented:

Copyeditors

Illustrators

Photographers

Researchers

Social Media/ PR Director

Tech Support

© Kathleen Harrington



THE RITUAL CRAFTING MINDSET

BY RICHARD "SKYLLAROS" DERKS



When I first started practicing Druidry, I heard it said that some Druids know right away in which subset (Bard, Ovate, or Druid) their vocation will reside. It may come as an immediate natural affinity or something that you grow into. For me, it was always the work of the Ovate. As such, I actually struggled quite a bit with the Bardic Grade and its focus on creativity. I was primarily interested in the natural sciences and the practice of magic. I just didn't think of myself as someone who could be described as "creative."

When I thought of the spirit of the Bard in that stage of my development, the pictures that came to mind were that of the storyteller, poet, or musician. None of those things really sparked an interest in me, and thus, for the first half of my time as a Bard, I found it very difficult to identify with the Bardic spirit. I confess that I thought that this stage of the work was one I would simply suffer through in order to get to the Ovate stage.

My breakthrough came when I realized that the Bardic spirit manifested itself within me through the practice of ritual crafting, that is, the crafting of ritual tools and implements. The Bardic spirit did indeed flow through me, yet the way that I perceive Awen was through the eyes of a craftsman. As a matter of fact,

I noticed that at the time of my peak magical efficiency, I was also at my most prolific in the creating of ritual crafts. The two went very hand-in-hand for me, and I could often gauge the health of my spiritual life by how much time

I spent crafting.

Creating your own tools is not as difficult or scary as one is often led to think. Many talented spiritual craftsmen exist in the Pagan community, and I have no problem with supporting them with my dollars when the need arises. However, there is a certain sense of satisfaction gained in crafting your own tools. They need not be grand or perfect, indeed not even pretty! The key words are functional

© Richard Derks



Trithemius table of practice with LED augmentation and ebony conjuration wand



and genuine. By creating your own tools, you imbue them with your own spirit and Nwyvre, and, thus, they are intimately tied to you. The very act of imagining what you will create is the beginning of the ritual crafting mindset.

To begin, you will need some basic tools. Three main ones that will go a long way in helping you to create your own ritual implements are: a knife, a Dremel, and a woodburning tool. The knife I use is my main ritual knife. It has an elk horn handle and a carbon steel blade, which is easy to sharpen. Many people keep their ritual dagger simply for ritual use, and that's fine, but I've never subscribed to that mindset. My dagger has to be practical! By using a consecrated ritual tool in both ritual and in crafting, I'm making a statement from the beginning to say the tool it creates is itself

sacred. Obviously, the knife will also be useful in cutting wood, whittling, and shaping wands and staffs.

The Dremel tool (or similar rotary one) is invaluable—a complete tool kit in one item. You can use it to cut, polish, sand, drill, and more. I created a whole set of Ogham fews by using the cutting attachment to create 2" long staves from a branch, and then using the sander attachment to sand off a face on each, which were later woodburned into the appropriate fews. The Dremel will become your most used tool, and it is well worth the investment.

Thirdly, we come to the wood-burning tool. This can be used to burn designs and impressions in the wood, to create ritual items from wooden disks and plaques to wands and staves. This could also be done with the dremel tool by using the etching attachment. I myself prefer to use the wood-burning tool because there is a sense of the sacred in using heat and fire to mark wood. Not only does this allow you to use another sense in the crafting process (the scent of burning wood), but the addition of the burning also tends to add an extra "spark" of life to the object that I find to be lacking in mere etching.

When I craft an item with a ritual focus, I usually begin by setting aside sacred space in which to create my ritual implement. If this can be done in my ritual chamber, all the better, but it need not be. If the tool requires a workshop, I delineate it as sacred space by doing an abbreviated version of the OBOD open-

© Richard Derks



Forces of Jupiter focus disk with lapis and tin



ing ceremony. I also always like to begin by chanting a round of Awens, just to get the juices flowing and remind myself that this is a sacred act. Feeling Awen flowing through me ignites my Bardic spirit, and that imbues the tool with a greater sense of the sacred. Then I can begin by working on my craft outright. I have even found it helpful to listen to a drumming tape in the background while doing so, which aids me into the trancelike state sometimes needed to let the powers that be guide my hands.

In the end, by using these simple

steps, I think you'll find that tools you create not only come out better than you may have imagined them to be, but also resonate with the power of the Other-world and your very own spirit.

Skyllaros has been on the Druid path for 10 years, and his Druidry is influenced by memberships in the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids and the Ancient Order of Druids in America. He considers himself a Hedge Druid, and he writes about his experiences in his blog, [Feral Druidry: The Crossroads Companion](#).

© Anne Hammond-Tooke



UPCOMING IN SUMMER 2016...

PART TWO OF OUR SERIES ON DHARMA & DRUIDRY



DRUIDRY IN THE WORKPLACE

INSPIRED BY NATURE
PHOTOGRAPHER ANNE HAMMOND-TOOKE

BY BARBARA A. POTT

Anne Hammond-Tooke grew up in South Africa and is an artist now living near the Appalachian mountain range in the United States. She prefers natural elements as the subject of her photographic artwork, which has graced the pages of this magazine since its inception. Anne specializes in macro photography with a preference for the abstract. In this interview, Anne shares with us her inspiration for her work and how it connects with her spirituality.

Barb: What was it like growing up in South Africa with regard to your natural surroundings?

Anne: Pretoria, South Africa has a wonderful climate for virtually all year round outdoor living. Properties are fenced; toys in my day were mainly low tech and children had a lot of undirected play opportunities outside. At weekends, we farmed a rural small holding in the Magaliesburg Mountains and enjoyed playing in the stream and hiking. My family travelled throughout southern Africa when I was a child, often camping in very remote areas. As a teenager I did the five-day



Anne stealthily waiting for her next objet d'art!

Otter Trail hike through the Garden Route in South Africa, a remarkable experience. My parents love the **African Bushveld** and instilled that love in me.

Barb: How old were you when you first connected with nature? What was the event or trigger that helped you make that connection? Does that connection continue?

Anne: For as long as I remember, I have been aware of my natural surroundings and the power of nature. For many reasons, living in Africa makes me more keenly aware of the fragility of life. Southern Africa experienced a severe drought during most of my early childhood. Our family efforts to conserve water and other natural resources honed my approach to life. Another defining moment for me was when a Bushveld



fire broke out on our Magaliesberg farm. With no fire department in the area, every man, woman, and child on the farm beat the fire out with wet sacks. Many years ago, I moved from sunny South Africa to Virginia during the month of January. Learning to live in centrally heated and cooled houses has been a big shock to my

when that connection didn't seem to be there? Did that apparent loss impact your ability to create?

Anne: When I'm feeling stressed, I fail to see the nuances and flow of nature. Consequently the photographs I produce lack life and vitality.

© Anne Hammond-Tooke



The Acacia tree (also known as the Umbrella tree) is an iconic African tree and one of Anne's favorites. She took this photo in film in Sabi Sands, South Africa

system. Getting out into nature with my camera helps me reconnect with my former, simpler life. Wherever I am, I seek out nature, and through my photography, try to honor and highlight her magnificence.

Barb: Did you ever experience a time

Barb: What inspired you to become an artist?

Anne: My grandmother painted in watercolors, an activity we did together at times. As a child, I had wonderful art classes with Lois Breytenbach, a Pretoria artist with great enthusiasm for her subject. More recently, I was lucky enough



to do a one-on-one photography class with Dr. Parv Sethi in Radford, VA, which opened my eyes to my own potential with the camera. Dr. Sethi is a geology professor at Radford University and a professional photographer, and he taught me about the settings on my camera, framing, lighting, and other basic guidance. I shot many photos during the class, and he expertly guided me through the process to improve them. I have always enjoyed photography, but it wasn't until several months after the class that I attached a close-up filter lens to my camera—that made me totally fall in love with photography, in particular nature macro photography. I'm drawn to unusual scenes and enjoy being able to photograph the inner workings of a flower.

Barb: What role does nature play for you in your work as an artist?

Anne: Nature is my primary and pre-

ferred subject matter. Nature lends itself to my type of photography because it feels unnatural for me to stage scenes or manipulate photographic images. I rather spend time communing with nature to see what scenes catch my attention and try to capture those without human intervention. This time behind the lens has led me to develop a deep connection and appreciation for nature and her inner workings.

Barb: Is there a link for you between nature, your artwork, and your spirituality?

Anne: Nature recharges and balances me, allowing me to look beyond myself and feel more connected to something greater than myself. In my photography, I try to depict nature in ways that show its vitality and energy.

Barb: How does your spirituality inform your work as an artist?

© Anne Hammond-Tooke



The beautiful valleys around Machadodorp, South Africa are peppered with fly-fishing getaway havens.



Anne: Communing with and photographing nature allows me to live in the moment and connect with the energy of nature.

Barb: Do you have any advice for budding artists?

Anne: Notice the background and look for the life in the scene. Become aware of the infinite choices that we have in how we see things, and how those choices create the reality we live with.

Barbara Pott is a Druid Grade member of the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids and a human resource professional. She insists that we can no more hide our spirituality (as opposed to religiosity) in the workplace than we can our personalities so it's best to be intentional about it.





WELCOME TO THE NATURAL WORLD

BY LYLE ALMOND

Welcome to *The Natural World*, where Druids commune and work with the sacred powers of plants, trees, animals, rivers, rocks, and clouds. We will feature articles on topics that incorporate wild ecological processes with our Druidic practices in sustainable landscaping; woodland gardening; cultivating edible, medicinal, and decorative woodland botanicals; and heightening our sensory experience of the forest into a deep communion with the Goddess.



Lyle Almond is a Bardic Grade member of the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids, and a member of the OBOD Oak and Eagle Seed Group. He lives in the woods outside Chestertown, MD, and works as the forest stewardship educator for University of Maryland Extension.

CULTIVATING A SACRED GROVE FOR THE NEW WORLD

The sacred grove is the place where the Goddess comes to greet us and where we welcome Her home, and Druidic ritual is the time appointed for our homecoming. For many of us, creating our sacred grove can present several challenges. Whether or not we hold our rituals in a crossroad clearing deep in the woods or we transform our own backyard gardens into places of magic and worship, our first concern is how well our efforts propitiate or honor the authenticity—the ancestral spirit—of the site.

Our greatest offering to the Goddess becomes a ritual act of biomimicry by emulating nature, specifically, honoring those site-specific natural ecosystem conditions out of which our sacred groves are given birth. For many, this can

become a confusing matter as to what trees we should plant in a garden grove or what elements can be introduced to honor the Goddess in a naturally existing grove. Some of this confusion stems from a long tradition of relying on exotic plants as featured elements in our landscape; it can also be traced back to the OBOD's reliance on the magical significance of certain trees (through the Ogham) that are native to Britain, but not to North America. In response, I would like to propose a New World Ogham, and know that already there are members of OBOD who have given considerable thought to this idea. Such a palette of native plants would include those that grew in our ancestral groves before European contact and would be regionally specific. The native plant



palette from which we should draw in the mid-Atlantic region would be completely different than those a Druid might select from in the Pacific Northwest. I will leave this matter for future articles and further input from other members of the OBOD community. I should point out that one of our members has already posted an excellent example of a native plant Ogham for

Florida on the [OBOD web-site](#)—and at least two *Druid Magazine* editors are working on their own currently!

© Lyle Almond



Appalachian Redbud, Mount Cuba Center, Hockessin, DE

The Forest Community

As a forester who has worked extensively with the dynamic interplay between contrasting species in forest mixtures, I am keenly aware of the importance of the very long timespans that are required to produce a fully functioning forest. This is time not measured in decades or centuries, but eons, for the co-evolutionary relationships to develop between plants and animals that determine their survival, not only as individual species, but as ecological communities.

In these biologically diverse forest ecosystems, an existential game is played in which the object is not to win the game, but to keep playing the game by developing specialized traits that allow: plants to grow on and beneath each other, arboreal animals to spend their entire lives in the canopy of a single tree, and soil fungi to optimize carbon sequestration by as-

sisting in the flow of moisture to the tree roots they invade. The forest is not only more com-

plex than we know, it's more complex than we *can* know.

Distill the Essence of the Forest

When we seek to emulate the Goddess's mystical presence by establishing our own sacred grove, we need only to distill the essence of this marvelous complexity in some way, not re-create the woods in its chaotic entirety, in order to tell some personally evocative story from the woodland's rich ecological narrative. Designed as woodland gardens, the sacred groves we plant 'read' better as bridges to the ancestors as abstractions



of the forest rather than re-creations of it. Take time to observe natural processes, natural features, and the functional responses of a nearby woodland to the seasons and times of day and night as well as the composition of the plants themselves. Keep in mind that our sacred groves are not just the trees (even the ancient Ogham contained plants other than trees), but also shrubs, herbaceous woodland flowers, ferns, perhaps even mosses, all arranged in ways that honor the Goddess by reflecting the ways in which they grow together in the forest.

This could mean incorporating some of the understory trees and shrubs that grow in nearby woodlands or adding a piece of downed wood to honor the eternal cycle of life and death. In our groves, a handful of smaller, shade-tolerant, or generally younger trees might form the primary canopy, even in a forested site where they may form a distinct mid-story layer beneath the overarching vault of an existing forest canopy. We can evoke some of the structural complexity of the woodland in our groves by massing some of our trees

and shrubs in groups of three or more, rather than lining them up in single file.

Further Reading

For those interested in learning more about the unique aesthetic design of native woodland gardens, I suggest you read *The American Woodland Garden* (2000) by Rick Darke. Additionally, I highly recommend its companion volume *The Living Landscape: Designing for Beauty and Biodiversity in the Home Garden*, which Darke co-wrote with entomologist Doug Tallamy, who popularized the critically unique role of native plants in our landscape to sustain a multifaceted food web of wildlife. If cultivating this kind of mutual interconnection between

plants and animals in your sacred grove is an important element in your Druidic practice, you may also want to read Tallamy's *Bringing Nature Home* (2009). I also recommend *Chesapeake Gardening and Landscaping: The Essential Green Guide* (2015) by Barbara Ellis. Although targeting gardeners in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, the guidance in this book is universally applicable.



Woodland garden walkway,
Mount Cuba Center, Hockessin, DE



The first step in cultivating the sacred grove is having a foundation of ecological landscaping practices. The Chesapeake Conservation Landscaping Council (CCLC) has issued a set of principles, *Conservation Landscaping Guidelines: The Eight Essential Elements of Conservation Landscaping*, which can be downloaded free from their [web site](#). Finally, for those who practice Druidry in the mid-Atlantic region, there is a [list containing hundreds of trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants](#) native to different ecoregions to use as a plant palette in cultivating your sacred grove. I invite readers to

submit native plant lists for other regions of North America to this column.

In future articles, we will discuss: the vital foundation of conservation landscaping practice in greater depth; illustrate a variety of ways to co-create the Goddess's ecological aesthetic through woodland gardening, including forest gardening techniques that add a deeper dimension of edible, medicinal, and decorative woodland harvests to our connection with Her; and share our moments of sublime experience with the presence of the Goddess in our Sacred Grove.

© Lyle Almond



Tuliptree, Mount Cuba Center, Hockessin, DE

References

- Darke, R. (2002). *The American woodland garden: Capturing the spirit of the eastern deciduous forest*. Portland, OR: Timber Press.
- Darke, R. & Tallamy, D. (2014). *The living landscape: Designing for beauty and biodiversity in the home garden*. Portland, OR: Timber Press.
- Ellis, B. (2015). *Chesapeake gardening and landscaping: The essential green guide*. Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press.
- Slattery, B. E., Reshetiloff, K., & Zwicker, S.M. (2003). *Native plants for wildlife habitat and conservation landscaping: Chesapeake bay watershed*. U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Chesapeake Bay Field Office, Annapolis, MD. Retrieved from http://www.nps.gov/plants/pubs/chesapeake/pdf/chesapeake_natives.pdf
- Slattery, B., Wertime R., Barth, C.A., Campbell, B., Cornwell, D.H., Curtis, M.,...W., Tangren, S. (2013). *Conservation Landscaping Guidelines: Eight Essentials of Conservation Landscaping*. Chesapeake Conservation Landscaping Council, Annapolis, MD. Retrieved from <http://www.chesapeakelandscape.org/resources/the-eight-essential-elements/>
- Tallamy, D. (2009). *Bringing nature home: How you can sustain wildlife with native plants*. Portland, OR: Timber Press.
- Wyninger, D. (2012). *Florida native plants Ogam. The Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids*. Retrieved from <http://www.druidry.org/library/trees/florida-native-plants-ogam>



BEAR MAIDEN: COMPANION IN WINTER

BY ALISON LEIGH LILLY

a bear in the wild.

It might seem odd to call bear a companion, this animal I've never seen.

In the urban landscape of Seattle, I'm surrounded by many more-familiar creatures: the chickadees who flit among the moss-covered pine branches just outside my window; the western hemlock, whose drooping peak nods in the wind thirty feet above the roof of the apartment complex across the street; the crow who clings like an acrobat to the telephone wires above the yard and joins his companions

every day about an hour before sunset, all of them gathering in a great, noisy, ambling flock making their way northwards towards the open green space of the nearby cemetery where they will settle down for an evening's gossip; and the steller's jay, the red-cedar, the pacific tree frog...

All of these are companions who share my world with me every day, going about their wild business. We nod to each

other, exchange glances, touch fingertip to leaf-bud. These companions remind me that even in a decidedly urban landscape, "nature" is not something to be shuffled

off out of the way. All things are natural, all things are holy. They remind me that I, too, am an animal of mud and blood, rock and bone, breath and sunlight. They are the crowd and the community. They press their presence like a friendly elbow in the side, teaching lessons of humor and humility, nudging me to renew my attention and re-connect to the here and now. They jostle and rustle and murmur of the interpenetrating intimacy of the natural

world in which I live, even in the city.

But not all of the companions who join us in our spiritual work elbow their way into our lives and demand our attention. Some linger beyond the limits of our ordinary experiences, leaving only footprints and snapped twigs as traces of their presence. These are our guides to the depths of mystery and wilderness. They are dark wanderers who cross our paths only in the obscurity of a moonless

© Alison Leigh Lilly



Alison Leigh Lilly



night, whose form we seem to see just on the periphery of our vision before it dissolves again into the tangled undergrowth of the unknown. They are the companions whose presence we sense with the thrill of uncertainty, that mixture of excitement and terror that gives rise to awe. Their breath is the sound on the edge of hearing that we catch just when we think we are alone.

Lest we forget that nature is not only familiar and intimate, but deeply wild and strange. Lest we forget that some things are hidden, and will remain hidden.

The Bear Maiden is, for me, this kind of companion. She is elusive and unseen, though she has left traces of her presence in my life that beckon me to seek her out. My life is oddly full of people who *have* encountered bears in the wild, sometimes in the most unlikely places and at unexpected times. Their stories are dark revelations of an eerie, shaman-like figure, sometimes mistaken for a shambling drifter or a scavenger of garbage and discarded, broken things.

But maybe this

all sounds overly romantic?

Though I've never seen a bear in the wild, I've spent time researching the bears that live in my area and their role in the local ecosystem, so that I might know the Bear Maiden better. Out here in the Pacific Northwest, both the common American black bear (*Ursus americanus*) and its larger, rarer cousin the brown bear (*Ursus arctos*) are shy of humans and avoid contact, though suburban encroachment into their habitats has made encounters more likely in recent decades. Ecologists consider bears to be an "engineer species" because of their important role in creating and maintaining the habitats on which they and other species depend. Feeding on the plentiful salmon returning from the ocean to freshwater during spawning season, bears carry half-eaten carcasses deep into the forest, helping to return much needed nutrients into the soil of the surrounding landscape.

Without bears, more than 50 percent of these nutrients would be washed downstream and back out to sea.

© Erwin and Peggy Bauer



Grizzly Bear



Bears have captured the imaginations of human beings for hundreds of thousands of years, and mythological traditions from around the world tell stories of the bear as a sacred animal. One of the bear's enduring mysteries is its winter hibernation, when the animal retreats into a den to sleep until the warmth of spring returns. It is during this time of winter retreat that female bears give birth,

most often to twins, and they emerge in the spring with these lively young cubs full of energy and curiosity about the world around them. This retreat into darkness

during the harshest months of cold and scarcity naturally suggests to the imaginative mind a connection between the bear and the mysteries of death and rebirth, and a close relationship with the earth as both tomb and womb.

Modern science has not dispelled these mysteries, but only served to deepen them. For a time, bears were not considered to be "true" hibernators because, although their heart-rate slows and their metabolism is suppressed during their winter torpor, their body temperature drops only a little and they can be roused

much more easily than other hibernating mammals. More recently, however, biologists have discovered a number of surprising facts about bear hibernation that have led them to reclassify it as a highly efficient hibernator.

One of the most interesting of these new discoveries is that—unlike other hibernators, which must awaken every few days to move, eat, and defecate—bears

can sleep for extended periods of time without waking. During this time, which can last for weeks, bears do not eat. Instead, they survive on the accumulated body fat from



Polar Bear Cubs

their summer and autumn foraging, losing up to half their body weight. Meanwhile, their waste is biochemically recycled within their bodies. Many of these recycled nutrients are used to help rebuild bone and muscle tissue that would otherwise deteriorate from long disuse. How exactly this process works is still a mystery to biologists, but research into this unique aspect of the bear's anatomy might one day unlock the secret to combating diseases like osteoporosis or even help humans travel through space by allowing us to more easily cope with extended time in zero-gravity.



Another deepening mystery is the process of pregnancy and birth in female bears. Depending on habitat and climate, most bear cubs are born in late winter to early spring; however, when a female gives birth is only partly related to the mating season and time of conception. Bears usually mate during the midsummer months, but a fertilized egg remains free-floating in the female's uterus for up to six months before implanting and continuing its development, at which time it grows very quickly, in about eight weeks.

The mother gives birth to her cubs in the midst of her long winter hibernation, and the cubs subsist on her milk until both mother and offspring are ready to emerge in the spring. Naturally, nursing and caring for her new cubs can put a strain on a female bear's resources, and this is one reason why the implantation and development of the egg is delayed. If a female doesn't gain enough weight during her autumn foraging or is unable to find an appropriately safe and protected den for the winter, the fertilized egg will not implant but will instead be reabsorbed into her body. This biological

process acts as a natural form of population control when resources like food or shelter are scarce, and it helps to ensure that the mother-to-be lives to see another year when her prospects of a successful birth might be better.

It's no wonder, then, that the bear is an animal sacred to wintery times of

darkness and scarcity. Though we may learn a great deal about the facts of biology and ecology, it can be easy to forget that there is a dark, wild world only partly illuminated when we try to direct the bright light of scientific inquiry its way.

The bear is,

for me, not only a sacred animal, but also a goddess. Her lessons are rooted in the soil that she nourishes with the blood and discarded carcasses of her prey. They are lessons of the dreaming soul, who gives birth to inspiration and creative work in the darkness of sleep during the longest nights of winter.

She is a solitary goddess, elusive, shy, a goddess of self-sufficiency and survival, preparation, discipline, even asceticism. And yet she is fierce in her caring—not only for others, but also for herself. She teaches me that it is possible to carry the strong energy of summer

© Steve Mastowski



The common American black bear (Ursus americanus)



at its height within myself, and to bring it to fruition during even the darkest, coldest days when those summer afternoons seem little more than a memory.

She also teaches me that I do not control divine inspiration, the conception of creativity and its manifestation. It is not a linear, mechanistic process, but a mystery that demands self-care and patience, a willing body nurtured by a sheltering earth. There are times when long months of waiting in the dark must pass before something new is ready to begin in me. Creation happens in the dark. Some things are hidden, and will remain hidden.

These can be frightening mysteries. The bear remains a hidden and unfamiliar animal to me, a presence that teases me with glimpses: the berry-studded scat on the side of the trail, the runic claw marks carved into the living bark of a tree. Like her black bears of the mountain forests,

the goddess, too, is wild and frightening at times. She does not come when she is called. She does not stoop to answer my prayers or coddle me when I am feeling sorry for myself. She demands that I go out into the wilds to seek her, that I enter the wilderness and mystery of Spirit.

Even then, she may withdraw at the clumsiness of my approach. There are times when I know her only as a dark, nameless longing that calls me out of myself, out into the world beyond, out into the waiting unknown.

Alison Leigh Lilly dwells in the lovely, rain-drizzled cityscape of Seattle, where she shares her home with her brilliant and bearded husband, her black cat, two pet frogs, and innumerable cedar trees. Nurturing the earth-rooted, sea-soaked, mist-and-mystic spiritual heritage of her Celtic ancestors, she explores themes of peace, poesis, and wilderness through essays, poetry, and podcasting. She is a member of the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids and the Druid Order of the Three Realms, as well as a founding member of her local CUUPS chapter.



© Brom Hanks



HOW TO... CULTIVATE HOUSE PLANTS

BY ALEC MAYER

Dear Readers,

Although we received a few inquiries for this issue, they fit better in other departments. So we decided to focus on an area that's fitting for the season... HOUSE PLANTS!!!

With the winter season fully established here in New England, the whole world seems to be blanketed in white. While I do enjoy the season of inner growth, I also miss green things growing all around! My home is absolutely full of plants, and I always find space for more.

Frequently, I get questions from visitors that have left me wondering how I can help others keep the green world alive in their own homes. I've thought on this for a long while, and have bounced around many ideas. Every time though, I always return to some of my old mentors and the lessons they shared with me.

Watering

Watering is a leading factor in the demise of a house plant. The largest myth is that you can time your watering. You just can't—it isn't possible to set a weekly or monthly or daily rotation! A plant is a living being and needs to be treated as such. When you bring a plant inside, you are now part of that plant's ecosystem. As you run around as us humans are want to do, just take a glance at your plants: Touch the soil,

WATERING RULES

- ✿ **Keep Moist (KM)**

Soil should remain damp to the touch.
- ✿ **Let Dry Out Slightly (LDOS)**

Soil should be dry on surface, but damp underneath.
- ✿ **Let Dry Out (LDO)**

Soil should be dry throughout the container, but not pulling away from the edge of the pot.

admire the leaves, and listen.

I follow the simple guidelines above, but they really come down to just paying attention to the soil and learning what a plant looks like when it's telling you that it needs a drink.

A plant like a Peace Lily can tolerate LDOS or KM. They do not want to dry out completely though and will promptly tell you so by wilting and by losing their green luster. Cacti like LDO, but will tolerate LDOS from time to time. Most garden centers should have someone on staff that can explain watering conditions for you.



Lighting

Most plants can and will adapt to the lighting conditions in a room, but may fade as time goes on anyway. Finding the right place for your houseplant is trial-and-error. Different rooms face different directions or have more windows; and there may be trees or buildings cutting out any direct light.

One of my rooms ([see photo of bathroom](#)) faces almost due north and, therefore, has no direct sunlight, but still has plenty of indirect light. Some plants that thrive in these conditions are ferns. Ferns are great bathroom plants because they love high humidity as well as indirect light.

The best thing for someone looking to have a green thumb with house plants to do is monitor how much direct and



Plants in the author's dining room include: Money Tree, Peace Lily, Elephant ears, Norfolk Island Pine, Variegated English Ivy, Cordyline, Prayer Plant, Tropical Hibiscus.



Plants in the author's workroom include: Prayer Plant, Birdnest Fern, Variegated Rubber Tree, Croton, Gardenia, and Variegated False Aralia



indirect light each room gets. That will allow a good base for what types of plants will work best.

Location

This means the right plant for the right location. Don't try to place a Gardenia in the basement! Look at each room as an ecosystem, and try to find the plants that will work best in them.

Alec Mayer is an Ovate Grade member of the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids, along with being a member of the Mystic River Grove of Massachusetts. He is the greenhouse manager at a local garden center, which has been voted the most innovative garden center in America for five years running and was featured in the magazine Today's Garden Center in 2012.

© Alec Mayer



Fern positioned in the window in the author's bathroom

ASK THE GREEN THUMB GURUS

Are you a Druid whose thumb is grayer than green? Do you have plant or garden questions only a qualified Druid can answer? **Submit your questions** now!

© Renu K. Aldrich





TREATING COLDS WITH HOMEOPATHY

BY SHELLEY KENEIPP

The common cold is caused by many different kinds of viruses. In the early stages, there can be symptoms of fever, chills, and/ or sweats, which is the body's natural way of fighting off the cold virus. Later, symptoms may include sneezing, runny nose, sore throat, ear-ache, headache, tearing eyes, and/ or cough. Each body is different, so the symptoms will vary. Mucus forms to trap viruses and expel them from the body. It is important not to repress a common cold with decongestants or nasal sprays because this will actually prolong the cold and make one feel worse when it "wears off." Overcoming a cold without repressing it, exercises the immune system and can build resistance to future viruses.

Homeopathy, if needed, helps to naturally resolve colds and makes one feel more comfortable. A cold can be the body's way of saying that it is run down, stressed out, or not getting enough sleep. It is key to treat a cold at the first sign of symptoms. Neglected colds can turn into more serious conditions and drag on and on for weeks. At the first sign of symptoms, write everything down that you observe. (*See below for the list of symptoms that may apply.*) Then, you can take the remedy that fits the symptom picture best. The sooner a remedy is ingested, the less the severity and duration of the cold. If you have taken a constitutional remedy (a prescribed remedy for a chron-

ic condition) by your homeopath, please check with her/ him before taking any remedies.

There are quite a few homeopathic remedies for colds; below is a list of the most common. First, look at what brought on the cold, i.e. the onset. Then look at the symptoms. Next, look at the color, temperature, or quality of the mucus. Check to see if there are any strange or peculiar symptoms present. Whichever remedy comes up most often in your assessment is the remedy you should use. This article is a thumbnail sketch of the symptoms for common colds. For a more complicated cold, or if other conditions arise, please refer to my book, *The Parent's Guide to Homeopathy*.

A HELPFUL OVERVIEW OF COLDS

First Stages of a Cold. Sometimes one is just not feeling well and there is not much in the way of distinctive symptoms. If this is the case, you can take *Ferrum Phosphoricum* at the first sign of a cold. People have a tendency to overuse this remedy because of the lack of symptoms so evaluate the symptoms before hastily using it. The person needing this remedy is talkative, excited, irritable, and adverse to company. They are a bit weak, chilly, and thirsty for cold drinks. There is often a need to follow with another remedy if the cold does not resolve.



The Onset:

- ✧ Comes on suddenly after being exposed to icy wind (North or East): *Aconitum Napellus*
- ✧ Comes on suddenly and violently after getting head wet or being exposed to dry, cold wind: *Belladonna*
- ✧ Slow and steady increase of symptoms: *Bryonia Alba, Ferrum Phosphoricum*
- ✧ Damp weather: *Allium Cepa, Arsenicum Album, Dulcamara*
- ✧ Getting chilled: *Arsenicum Album, Calcareea Sulphurica, Hepar Sulphuris, Kali Bichromicum, Mercurius Vivus¹, Pulsatilla, Silicea², Sulphur*
- ✧ Getting wet: *Calcareea Sulphurica, Phosphorus, Rhus Toxicodendron, Sepia*
- ✧ Getting chilled and then overheated: *Arsenicum Album, Kali Sulphuricum,*
- ✧ *Rhus Toxicodendron*
- ✧ Exposed to cold, wet weather: *Arsenicum Album, Dulcamara, Lycopodium Clavatum*
- ✧ After sitting on damp ground: *Rhus Toxicodendron*
- ✧ After getting feet wet: *Allium Cepa, Pulsatilla, Silicea²*
- ✧ From shock/ fright: *Aconitum Napellus*
- ✧ After exposure to cold winds: *Aconitum Napellus Allium Cepa, Bryonia Alba, Belladonna, Hepar Sulphuris, Nux Vomica*
- ✧ From changes in weather: *Calcareea*

Carbonica, Calcareea Sulphurica

- ✧ Comes on after a snowfall: *Sepia*
- ✧ From being in frosty air: *Sepia*
- ✧ Weather suddenly turns cold: *Silicea²*
- ✧ From getting overheated or overexerted: *Arsenicum Album*

Specific Symptoms of Colds:

- ✧ Colds with the person being very chilly: *Arsenicum Album, Hepar Sulphuris, Nux Vomica, Silicea²*
- ✧ Colds with eye discharges: *Allium Cepa, Dulcamara, Euphrasia Officinalis, Natrum Muriaticum*
- ✧ Extremely sensitive to cold and heat: *Mercurius Vivus¹*
- ✧ Face flushed bright red and many times eyes are dilated: *Belladonna*
- ✧ Frequent sneezing: *Aconitum Napellus, Allium Cepa, Calcareea Sulphurica, Hepar Sulphuris, Kali Bichromicum, Lycopodium Clavatum, Mercurius Vivus¹, Natrum Muriaticum, Nux Vomica, Rhus Toxicodendron, Silicea², Sulphur*
- ✧ Headache with a cold: *Aconitum Napellus, Belladonna, Bryonia Alba, Nux Vomica, Phosphorus, Pulsatilla Nigricans, Silicea², Sulphur*
- ✧ Colds with a loss of smell and/ or taste: *Calcareea Carbonica, Calcareea Sulphurica, Hepar Sulphuris, Kali Bichromicum, Mercurius Vivus¹, Natrum Muriaticum, Phosphorus, Pulsatilla Nigricans, Silicea²*



Types of Mucus:

- ✧ Blood-streaked mucus: *Phosphorus*
- ✧ Burning mucus: *Arsenicum Album*
- ✧ Clear/ Frothy: *Silicea*²
- ✧ Hot mucus: *Aconitum Napellus*, *Allium Cepa*, *Sulphur*
- ✧ Profuse flow: *Allium Cepa*, *Arsenicum Album*, *Dulcamara*, *Euphrasia Officinalis* (during the day) *Kali Sulphuricum*, *Mercurius Vivus*¹, *Natrum Muriaticum*, *Nux Vomica* (during the day,) *Phosphorus*, *Rhus Toxicodendron*
- ✧ Watery mucus: *Allium Cepa*, *Arsenicum Album*, *Dulcamara* (at the beginning of the cold), *Euphrasia Officinalis*, *Mercurius Vivus*¹ (at the beginning of the cold), *Natrum Muriaticum*, *Nux Vomica*, *Rhus Toxicodendron* (at the beginning of the cold)
- ✧ Yellow mucus: *Calcarea Carbonica*, *Calcarea Sulphurica*, *Dulcamara* (as the cold progresses), *Hepar Sulphuris*, *Kali Sulphuricum*, *Lycopodium Clavatum*, *Pulsatilla Nigricans*, *Sulphur*
- ✧ Yellow/ Green mucus: *Kali Bichromicum*, *Mercurius Vivus*¹ (as the cold progresses), *Rhus Toxicodendron* (as the cold progresses), *Sepia*
- ✧ White/ Grey mucus: *Kali Muriaticum*
- ✧ Chilly, but wants window open at night: *Pulsatilla Nigricans*
- ✧ Cold sores with colds: *Natrum Muriaticum*, *Rhus Toxicodendron*
- ✧ Colds in females that comes on just before, during, or just after periods: *Sepia*
- ✧ Colds that come on after getting a haircut: *Belladonna*
- ✧ Colds with a constant urge to stretch: *Rhus Toxicodendron*
- ✧ Craves ice cold drinks or food, but is chilly: *Phosphorus*
- ✧ Drooling on pillow: *Mercurius Vivus*¹
- ✧ Has a discharge, but everything feels very dry: *Bryonia Alba*
- ✧ Has to have every part of the body covered up because they are so chilly: *Hepar Sulphuris*
- ✧ Mucus tastes salty: *Natrum Muriaticum*
- ✧ Profuse flow of mucus, but feels stuffed up: *Allium Cepa*
- ✧ Sleeps with feet out from under the covers: *Sulphur*
- ✧ Sneezing in warm room or during sleep: *Pulsatilla Nigricans*
- ✧ Symptoms are constantly changing: *Pulsatilla Nigricans*
- ✧ Wants to keep nose warm by covering it up: *Dulcamara*
- ✧ Yawns a lot in open air: *Euphrasia Officinalis*
- ✧ Lots of gas and bloating: *Lycopodium Clavatum*

Colds with Strange, Rare, or Peculiar Symptoms:

- ✧ Burning symptoms, but wants warmth and warm drinks: *Arsenicum Album*



For persistent colds, look to the following remedies:

Old “ripe” colds: *Hepar Sulphuris*, *Kali Bichromicum*, *Kali Muriaticum*, *Kali Sulphuricum*, *Pulsatilla Nigricans*, *Silicea*², *Sulphur*. If the cold persists, consult with your physician as well as research remedies in depth to find the best one for you.

DOSAGE

Homeopathic remedies come in various potency strengths, but the most common is 30C to treat the common cold and it is available in the majority of health food stores and natural pharmacies. If the onset is fast, take two pellets every 15 minutes for four doses and then hourly until improvement. If there has been no improvement after six doses, choose a new remedy. If there is gradual improvement, stay with the same remedy and repeat more often.

If the onset has been slow, take the remedy every 1–2 hours for six doses. Keep repeating the remedy only if there is a return of the same symptoms. You may need to repeat the remedy two or three times per day for several days.

If you get no result after six doses or the remedy helped, but did not hold, then reassess. Change the remedy if you have followed the above guidelines and have had no results or if the symptoms clearly change.

An example: *Aconitum Napellus*



Aconitum Napellus

may be the remedy needed initially. But as the first 24 hours go by, symptoms may change and indicate, for instance, that one has moved on to *Pulsatilla Nigricans*.

SUPPORTIVE MEASURES

Make sure to drink lots of fluids and rest, rest, rest. A headache can be a sign of dehydration. Cut out sugary juice drinks. Fresh squeezed juice is best. Avoid dairy products because they cause mucus. Consume lots of fruit (fresh, if possible), because it contains high amounts of vitamin C. If you live in a dry climate, a cool mist vaporizer can be helpful to break up thick mucus.



CALL YOUR HEALTHCARE PRACTITIONER IF...

- ➔ Your baby is under three months old and has any rise in temperature.
- ➔ There is a temperature over 103° F (39.4° C).
- ➔ A fever persists for more than 24 hours in a child under two years of age.
- ➔ A fever persists for more than three days.
- ➔ There is lack of reaction, trouble breathing, repeated vomiting, deliriousness, or convulsions.
- ➔ There is a loss of appetite over a period of several days.
- ➔ You cannot get your child to drink, especially if there is a fever.
- ➔ There is stiffness in the neck.
- ➔ There is a severe headache with vomiting.
- ➔ There is high pitched, piercing screaming with no break.
- ➔ A rash develops.

Notes

1. aka *Mercurius Sol*
2. aka *Silica Terra*

Shelley Keneipp, M.H., DiHom, holds diplomas from The British Institute of Homeopathy, U.K., the Dynamis School for Advanced Homeopathic Studies, U.K., and has furthered her advanced studies with the Guild of Homeopaths in England. Shelley is the author of the book, [The Parent's Guide to Homeopathy](#).



Pulsatilla Nigricans



REKINDLING THE SACRED FIRES: PART TWO

BY GREYWOLF

Long ago, the peoples of Europe, Northern Asia, and the Americas had much in common, including the belief that the cosmos was divided into three parts (Baldick, 2012). The Upper-

world is inhabited by sun, moon, and star beings, and by thunder-beings in the form of birds, winged serpents, and dragons. Humans receive messages from Upper-world spirits via birds, particularly eagles and members of the crow family. We send messages back via birds, by making offerings onto sacred fires or by burning herbs or incense.

Below the earth's surface, the Under-world is home to some of the dead and other spirits, including a great serpent or dragon, who brings earthquakes, fear, illness, and death, but is also a potent source of healing if its power can be harnessed. The Middle-world is where we and other animals live, including our fellow hunters and foragers such as wolves. Archaeology suggests that

humans and wolves began to work together at least 30,000 years ago in Europe and Northeast Asia ("Study Reveals More Clues," 2013), beginning the process whereby wolves evolved into domestic dogs.

I am called Greywolf because of a vision (described in full in Greywolf, 2015a). With my sons, Joe and Mike, and our friend, Ani, I visited the village of La Push on the Quileute reservation on the Pacific Coast of the Olympic Peninsula in 2004. On the evening we arrived, there happened to be a potlatch ceremony. As it began, the leader of the ceremony, Vince Penn, asked me to

speak so I introduced myself as Greywolf, also known as Philip. I drummed and sang a wolf spirit song given to me 10 years earlier amongst the stone circles of Avebury in Wiltshire, U.K. It started off as a Seneca wolf chant, but I never could remember it no matter how many times people taught it to me. After the third try, I realized that my wolf spirit had



Greywolf drumming at Avebury, Wiltshire, U.K.





Gundestrup cauldron

taken the Seneca chant and transformed it into a native British wolf chant, and that is what I sang¹ in the Quileute circle that evening (Greywolf, 2015b). (See photo on page 62.)

Vince's wife, Sharon, told me that a few days before the ceremony an early arrival at the weekly meeting of elders had asked, "Where's Greywolf?" The others thought maybe he meant Grey Eagle. He said, "No. It's Greywolf, and he's either here or he's coming." This, along with a string of other 'coincidences' surrounding our visit, convinced me that powerful spirits wanted my sons and I to be connected with the Quileute. Part of this is linked to the tribe's origins:

Long ago, Q'wati, the Transformer, journeyed all over the land setting the people aright and instructing the people that would come in the future how they should act. When Q'wati reached the Quileute land, he saw two wolves. There were no people there. Q'wati transformed the wolves into people. Then he instructed the people, saying, 'For this reason you Quileute shall be brave, because you come from wolves. In

every manner you shall be strong.'
("The Origin of the Tribes," 1969)²

Having shape-shifted into wolf myself, this story evokes a powerful sense of kinship. Peoples elsewhere in the world share a similar descendency. In ancient Greece, the *Lykaia* festival held on Mount Lykaion (which translates to 'Wolf Mountain') centred on its adolescent male participants (*epheboi*) turning into wolves. As patron of this festival, Zeus, the shape-shifting father-god, was called Zeus Lykaios ('Wolf-Zeus') ("Lykaia," 2015). The *Luperci* ('Wolf brothers') were priests of the mid-February *Lupercalia* ('Wolf Festival'), during which the god, Pan, visited the Lupercal Cave on the Palatine Hill in Rome, where the she-wolf, Lupa, had suckled Romulus and Remus, the city's founders ("Lupercalia," 2015). The origin legend of the Turkic culture that spread from central Asia around the 6th century BCE tells of an injured infant found by a blue-maned she-wolf (Baldick, 2012). She nursed him back to health and later bore him 10 half-wolf, half-human sons. One, Ashina, became their leader and established a clan that ruled several Asian empires.

Many ancient peoples had clan systems or societies, including Wolf Warrior Societies. The Quileute have one (Frachtenberg, 1921), and Cheyenne Dog Soldiers are widely known (Mails, 1998). Less well known are Wolf Warriors of Europe and Asia, variously known as *vrātyas* (India), *kouros* or *ephebes* (Greece), *luperci* (Rome), *männerbünde* (Germany), *fian* (Ireland), and *bleiddiaid*



or *bleiddiau* (Wales) (Brown & Anthony, 2012). These war-bands consisted of boys divided into age sets who lived in the wild separated from their families without possessions, and they wore animal skins and behaved as if they were wolves or dogs. Their duties centered on fighting and raiding, but they also learned poetry and traditional stories. They celebrated winter ceremonies that included initiations and the ritual consumption of dog or wolf flesh. They took names containing words meaning 'wolf' or 'dog.'

Traces of wolf clans and individuals survive in British and Irish records. Cunobelinos, Shakespeare's Cymbeline, who ruled much of Southeast England in the 1st century CE, has a name meaning 'Wolf of [the god] Belinos' ("Celtic Names Glossary," 2013; Russell & Mullen, n.d.). Other Romano-British names include Cunovendus, 'Bright Wolf,' and

Cunobarrus, 'Wolf Chief.' The 'cu' or 'cuno' element in Celtic names is often translated as 'hound' but originally seems to have meant 'wolf.' Wolf and dog are often interchangeable in myth, ceremony, and spirit. Irish wolf names include Faolán ('Wolf'), Anglicised as

Fillin or Phelan, various Conors, Conns, Conans, and the legendary Ulster hero, Cúchulainn, whose death resulted partly from breaking a taboo (Irish *geis*) against eating canine flesh. ("The Death of Cúchulainn," n.d.)

Britain's great collection of legends, the *Mabinogi*, features several shape-shifters. In the story of Math, son of Mathonwy, Math changes the god, Gwydion, and his brother, Gilvaethwy, into mated pairs of animals, including wolves (*The Mabinogion*, 2007).

As a wolf, Gilvaethwy

gives birth to a pup who becomes a human child named Bleiddwn, 'Wolf,' when Math restores the brothers to human form. Perhaps modern-day Bleddyns and Blethins are descended from this mythical shape-shifter.

© Greywolf



Horned figure flanked by dog and wolf, Kells Market Cross, as depicted in *The Druid Tarot* created by Greywolf



My ancestor, Cunedda, whose name means 'Good Hound or Wolf,' was a 5th century king of the southern Scottish Gododdin tribe. He is descended from Beli Mawr ('Great Shining, or Strong, One'), tutelary deity of Cunobelinus.

Wolves and other canines feature in Celtic archaeology too; one example being the wolf standing beside the antlered figure on the 1st century CE Gundestrup cauldron, which was found in Denmark but probably made by silversmiths from west of the Black Sea (see photo on page 63). Dogs accompany various deities, including Nodens, whose 4th century CE healing sanctuary was at Lydney in Gloucestershire, England (see illustration). A horned, bearded figure flanked by a wolf and a dog is carved on a 9th century CE stone Market Cross in Kells, County Meath, Ireland (see photo on page 64).

Over centuries of Christianization, imposed by the Roman Empire from the 3rd century CE, Europeans gradually lost their spiritual links with animals, though these remained sufficiently strong that several early churchmen preached against the practice of dressing as animals during seasonal festivals. A recent project called

Wilder Mann by photographer Charles Fréger shows that the practice still survives in parts of Europe (Fréger, 2010–2011), albeit shorn of its association with Paganism and, therefore, much of its meaning. Shape-shifting, formerly recognized as a huge benefit to warriors and spirit workers, became debased into tales of werewolves, told to frighten children. Wolves came to be seen only as creatures

to be feared, and feature as such in European folk tales like *Little Red Riding Hood*. Fortunately, as part of our process of rekindling the sacred fires, modern Pagans are reviving the tradition of dressing as animals in seasonal celebrations, honouring the spirits of the animals (Broch, 2010).³

The art of shape-shifting is also returning. The

first time I became wolf, I needed to enter the Otherworld to help a sick friend. I sang my wolf chant, and my spirit wolf companion appeared, crouched low; he tensed his muscles and then ran at me. Before I could react, his body slammed into mine, and we exchanged spirits. He remained in my body while my consciousness transferred into his. My perspective lowered as I continued to bound forward into the Otherworld as wolf. My senses

© Greywolf



Greywolf's painted drum



were heightened to an incredible degree. My priorities shifted, too. The concerns of daily life dropped away, and my focus narrowed to just the task at hand. Being wolf brought single-mindedness, allowing me to do what had to be done quickly and efficiently. The task done, we switched bodies again.

Shape-shifting is not something to do simply because you can. It's not a plaything or an ego prop, but should be undertaken in times of genuine need. At least, I see it that way. Others may feel differently. Connecting with animal spirits brings with it a responsibility to maintain and nurture those connections. I sing my wolf chant, wear wolf hides in ceremony, and always carry or wear something that connects me with wolf spirit. Two wolf-skin rugs made in the 1940s were gifted to me by spirit 10 years apart, and I made both of them into cloaks. I sleep with them on my bed. I painted a Pictish wolf on the deer-skin drum I made (see *photo on page 65*). I feel another kind of link to deer, which are prey animals of wolves.

A fundamental lesson from working with spirit animals is that non-human beings are not 'dumb beasts.' Their interactions with our shared environment are often more complex than our own, involving a greater-than-human range and intensity of sensation. Animals have equally strong bonds of kinship, affection, and affiliation. Shape-shifting changes more than bodily shape. Perceptions change, too. It is impossible to hate, exploit, denigrate, or persecute

an animal in whose paw prints you have walked. Becoming animal makes us re-view our relationship with our fellow animals, with our world, and with "all our relations."

References

- Baldick, J. (2012). *Animal and shaman: Ancient religions of Central Asia*. London: I. B. Tauris.
- Broch, C. (2010). Bear tribe—about us. Retrieved January 13, 2016, from http://www.ancientmusic.co.uk/bear_tribe/about.html
- Brown, D., & Anthony, D. (2012, December). *Midwinter dog sacrifices at LBA Krasnosamarskoe, Russia and traces of initiations for Männerbünde*. Paper presented at Tracing the Indo-European: Origin and migrations, Roots of Europe Research Center, University of Copenhagen, Denmark. Retrieved from http://www.academia.edu/6683149/Midwinter_dog_sacrifices_and_warrior_initiations_in_the_Late_Bronze_Age_at_the_site_of_Krasnosamarskoe_Russia
- Celtic names glossary. (2013, July 8). Retrieved January 13, 2016, from http://www.druidcircle.org/library/index.php?title=Celtic_Names_Glossary
- The death of Cú Chulainn. (n.d.). Retrieved January 13, 2016, from Clan Donald heritage website: http://www.clandonald-heritage.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=63:the-raven&catid=47:celtic-myths&Itemid=73
- Frachtenberg, L. J. (1921). *The ceremonial societies of the Quileute Indians*. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/ceremoni-alsociet00fracrich>
- Fréger, C. (2010–2011). *Wilder Mann series, 2010–2011* [Photograph]. Charles Fréger. Retrieved from <http://www.charlesfreger.com/portfolio/wilder-mann/>
- Greywolf. (2015a). Tribes of spirit: Animals as ancestors. In P. Davies & C. Matthews (Eds.), *This ancient heart: Landscape, ancestor, self* (pp. 24–30). Winchester, U.K.:



Moon Books.

Greywolf. (2015b, June 17). *Native British wolf chant* [Audio file]. Retrieved from <http://greywolf.druidry.co.uk/2014/06/wolf-chant-at-avebury>

Lupercalia. (2015, October 1). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved January 13, 2016, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lupercalia>

Lykaia. (2015, December 15). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved January 13, 2016, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lykaia>

The Mabinogion (S. Davies, Trans.). (2007). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mails, T. E. (1998). *Dog soldier societies of the Plains*. New York: Marlowe and Company.

The origin of the tribes. (1969). In M. J. Andrade & L. J. Frachtenberg (Comps.) & M. J. Andrade (Trans.), *Columbia University contributions to anthropology: Vol. 12. Quileute texts* (pp. 82–85). New York: AMS Press.

Russell, P. & Mullen, A. (Eds.). (n.d.). *Kuno-*

[Search results]. Retrieved from Celtic personal names of Roman Britain - CPNRB database.

Study reveals more clues to origins of domesticated dog. (2013). *Popular Archaeology*. Retrieved from <http://popular-archaeology.com/issue/09012013/article/study-reveals-more-clues-to-origins-of-domesticated-dog>

Greywolf, also known as Philip Shallcrass, is chief of the British Druid Order (BDO), a High Priest of Alexandrian Wicca, a member of the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids, and a member of the Quileute Drum Circle. A musician, writer, and artist, he makes frame drums and designs, builds, and thatches Iron Age roundhouses.

For the last nine years, Greywolf has been researching, writing, and editing distance learning courses for the BDO. Born on the English coast, he now lives in Wiltshire with two of his three sons halfway between the ancient stone circles of Avebury and Stonehenge.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

1. To hear Greywolf's *Wolf Chant*, go to:

<http://greywolf.druidry.co.uk/2014/06/wolf-chant-at-avebury/>

2. For the full version of the story as told to Leo J. Frachtenberg by either Hallie George or Arthur Howeatle in 1915–16, see Manuel J. Andrade, *Quileute Texts*, AMS Press, 1969, section 27, 'The origin of the tribes,' pages 82–85.

3. See, for example, The Bear Tribe, at:

http://www.ancientmusic.co.uk/bear_tribe/about.html

This article includes material from the British Druid Order's distance learning courses:

<http://www.druidry.co.uk/bdo-courses/>



EISTEDDFOD

STORYTELLING IN THE HINDU TRADITION

BY GAIL NYOKA

"When I was a little girl, people used to joke that I would get married and dance in the kitchen" Rubena Sinha says.

The Toronto-based storyteller tells me that she has been dancing since before she can remember. In earlier times, temple dancers had been known as *Debdashis*, or God's Servants, and they were called prostitutes to the priests. Rubena's grandmother and uncle had not wanted her to be associated with dance even though this was no longer the practice. Yet, her mother saw how much she enjoyed it and allowed Rubena to take lessons despite the objections of those family members.

"Our dance is stories," she says. "Everything is involved in spiritual stories, dance, storytelling, and music. The stories are in the music."

Sinha divides the stories of India into three categories: the major epics, the Ramayana and Mahabharata known throughout the continent; the folk

stories, which are more local in nature, and enshrine the stories of the people, the land, and of the local kingdoms; and stories that are somewhat similar to fairy tales. She describes a miracle story that she tells about a tiger and a holy man...

Two men had trapped a tiger and put him in chains. By taking the tiger around to houses in the towns and cities, they could make money from people who would throw coins to them. But, a tiger is a large animal, requiring lots of meat and used to running free. The captors could not provide the tiger with sufficient food, and it was forced to drink water from the sewer. In its chains, the tiger was not able to move, and soon

became weak and emaciated.

The tiger was no longer the magnificent animal it had once been. People stopped giving money to see it, and the men gave the animal even less food. The tiger became weaker. "What shall we do?" the men asked. "We must



Storyteller Rubena Sinha in action

do something before our tiger dies."

They heard about a holy man at a nearby temple. It was said that this holy man could restore health with just a look.

The captors hurried to the temple and removed the tiger's chains—for, in his weakened state, the animal no longer needed them. When he saw the holy man, the tiger staggered towards him and lay down in front of him. The holy man, who had been meditating, opened his eyes and looked into the eyes of the tiger. The animal lifted his head and placed it on the holy man's lap. "It is time for you to go home," said the holy man gently. On hearing these words, the tiger died peacefully.

The men who had brought the tiger were outraged. "How dare you kill our tiger?" they said. "You were supposed to cure him."

"It is not I who killed the tiger," answered the holy man. "It was you."

"I love those stories," Sinha says. "They remind us that we have forgotten to harness our own power. They tell us how we can harness our inner strength and perform a miracle." These stories are not widely written down, surviving mostly in the oral tradition.

"If you go to each family, individually, they will have a story. They may not tell you, but they have a story. Stories are there, all over," Sinha says. This is particularly true of local people, events, politics, and stories concerning the old kingdoms of India. Some of the

kings were good, while others, not. Their stories, good and bad, are passed down in the stories of local families.

"When I was growing up," says Sinha, "people would come and sing for you in your house. There would be people whose job it is to tell stories. They are still there, although now it has gone into the universities."

Sinha left her native India in the 1960s, moving to Winnipeg and, later, to Toronto. In Canada, she has had to change her story style. "As I get older, I can't dance any more. I use movement expressively. Telling a story with English words, I cannot use too much movement, or I will lose my audience," she says. She also simplifies her stories: "Not everyone has the background and knows the names. So many characters are involved in an epic story."

There are thousands of gods in the Hindu tradition. "Everything has a god: rain, thunder. Our stories come from those gods." Many are included in the [Ramayana](#) and [Mahabharata](#). "Those epics are so involved in everyday life. You can find a god who is related to you—bad or good. Everything is in the epics... the psyche of humanity. From there you get the wisdom to be what you want to be in the world."

Storyteller, author, and award-winning playwright [Gail Nyoka](#) has been experiencing Awen with the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids since 2001. She is a celebrant and officiant in Ontario and Ohio.





SAI KALA

BY RACE MOCHRIDHE

Crepusculum—

An arc of light through cloud
to cull my breath
and sheaf it for the harvest,

to call my spirit to supernal sun
beyond the sheets of rain—self-
emptying,

like lightning into oak, like foam
into the wine-dark sea, like seeds
adrift on summer's bygone wind.

My Mother's scythe—
a staff exscribing circles—
a wind upon the grass,

like the flutter of my breath
against the water
where the sun has set.

I am weary, and we are close.
Closer than the vein within
my neck, which is your shining ladder,
closer than the heads upon your garland,
threaded lovingly like I
and Thou upon a strand of breath.

I am weary, and would know
the sand again, where we tussled
in the seagull's cry and knew
ourselves, molten as the leaden
sky, set hard as Zoroaster's
river returning to the sea.

I am weary, and I love you
from whom life has parted me—
the image in whose company
my heart first opened and, in opening
closed fast my eyes
beneath a silver dream so red-

olent of lead. Line upon
argyric line are traced the veins
by which I drink the flow of time,
somatic and insomniac.
Thereby in every drop the taste
of you and I, and I grow weary.



DEHISCENCE

BY RACE MOCHRIDHE

Sumac to sumac
I walked the road
like a shadow in
the broken dawn,

I, too, am light
through which the shadow's
passed, that shines
beneath her belly—

like a wisp of crystal
smoke, lattice-
curled from
a dragon's nose.

where the cauldron burns
and I become
the waters, rubedo
from darkness draws me

Thus the winter
comes to sleep
upon a pile
of fallen gold.

and I, a wisp
of smoke from the seventh
tongue, walk
again the road

Thus I imagine
She might come
for me, to lay
upon my tarnish.

where every tree
is bare except
the sumac, red
but unconsumed.

For I, too,
am gold that's given
way to brown,
and black, and nothing.

Race MoChridhe is a Bard in the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids as well as a Dedicant in Ár nDraíocht Féin. He writes about life in the hopes of living it more authentically, and hopes that his strict Druidic forebears will forgive him for practicing the forbidden art upon the pages of numerous Pagan magazines as well as in his blog, [Nemeton at the Sorbonne](#).

See Race's article on [The Wild Cauldron](#)





IN BETWEEN

BY MATTHEW IKONEN

*In Between Samhuinn and Alban Arthan,
between dying and being born;
An ocean of yellow and orange leaves,
sigh in the boughs before falling.
One final dance with the wind,
descending unto the welcoming ground.
Long they have awaited Autumn's chill kiss,
gently giving in to gravity's pull.
Entering the Dark Mother's loving mouth,
to incubate through winter—and to be born anew.*

© Matthew Ikonen



Matthew Ikonen is a member of the OBOD Keepers of Dragon Knowledge Grove in Ann Arbor Michigan, a tree-hugging hippie, a Licensed Massage Therapist, and plant-based nutrition nerd.

PLEASE DONATE
TO KEEP DM PUBLISHING

SEND US FEEDBACK ON FUTURE
DM SUBSCRIPTION OPTIONS



A WINTER POEM

BY RAYMOND TALIESIN



As Math, son of Mathonwy
would hear it on the wind,
so do I...

The snowy whoosh of winter
skis shooshing down their tracks
thrilling the chilling wind as they ride
smoothly down curvaceous hillsides

The hare has turned ivory white
The pale Lynx follows
pounces fast
Icy, wintry, jaws of death
clamp down and crunch

like the crusty snow, surrounding the
limbs
of the sacred, naked, oaken tree
while a haze of frost paints the needly fingers
of the silvery blue and dark green trees

The fir tree has its winter coat too
and bobbles, bangles, and ribbons as well
dressed for its wake
after its final, deadly fall
and yes, we celebrate that too

© Gail Nyoka



The Sun returns!
after a fallow, icy snow
transforming frost into diamonds
nature's own tinsel show

The holly faeries laugh
dancing along with the tinkling, tenor tune
of newly thawed creeks
and the baseline of groaning, cracking,
crunching ice

I hear this on the wind....

This is the Northwest corner of Turtle
Island
the rain will return again soon
falling in cold, silvery threads of new
baptism

The rainy swoosh of winter returns
thrilling the wind as it flies
smoothly across curvaceous hillsides
emerald green counter melodies
sound across the hills, and through the boughs

all this I hear,
I hear it on the wind...

Raymond Taliesin is in the Bardic Grade in the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids, a priest in the British Druid Order, and host of the Pagan radio show "Wheel of Wonder" on KAOS 89.3FM in Olympia, WA (check it out on Radio Free America).





THE DRUID'S REDE

BY JANICE SCOTT-REEDER KING

WE ARE DRUIDS.

WE ARE THE CARETAKERS OF THE EARTH.

WE FEED THE HUNGRY, HEAL THE SICK OR
INJURED AND AID THE DESPONDENT.

WHETHER HUMAN, ANIMAL, INSECT, REPTILE,
BIRD, FISH OR PLANT.

THIS IS THE MANDATE, OUR PURPOSE.

WE ARE THE NEXUS OF ALL LIVING AND
NON-LIVING BEINGS.

BY THE WILL OF THE EARTH WE EXIST.

BY OUR WILL THE EARTH FLOURISHES.

HISTORY OF THE DRUID'S REDE

BY GEORGE KING

I have been for some time working on a public "Lebor Druidic" or Book of Druidism. Politicians, lawyers, and governments are well versed in the Abrahamic or the three religions of the book, which provide accepted sets of text or rules of behavior. (Of course, they are

full of contradictions and followers sometimes pick and choose what fits their agenda.) When a 90-year-old man and two pastors were **charged by the police for feeding the homeless** in Florida near us, they had a very clear and moral defense in their religion's book (the *Bible*)



to call upon. Yet, this would not have been so easy or possible (to my knowledge) for most Druids, Heathens, Witches, or other Pagans.

The Witches Rede, first publicly recorded in a 1964 speech by Doreen Valiente, is somewhat well known and often quoted as a behavior model or a defense for those in the craft. So it became clear that the "Greater Druidica" needed a *Druid's Rede*, something our own members could use but that was generic enough for other Druid groups and solitaires to use as a written rule of required Druidic religious behavior. And while the *Druid's Rede* at 62 words is a bit longer than its Wiccan counterpart, it covers both mandate and purpose.

Those that honor the *Druid's Rede's* principles, we respect. Those that both can and do fulfill it, we call Druid. It is my hope that the *Druid's Rede* will

become well known internationally and, thus, serve its purpose.

A note from Janice...

George wanted a non-profit religious statement of purpose that was simple and short so it could be printed out and handed to the police. So I did what I usually do and simply relaxed and let all those Druids who have come before me dictate the Rede, and I think they did a pretty good job.

Janice Scott-Reeder King is owner of the Cosmic Salamander, Inc., Witan of Craeftgemot Witan-coveyne, Inc., a Druid, seer, astrologer, tarotist, biofeedback and pain management therapist, hypnotherapist, and cat mother.

George King, aka TDK (the Druid King), and Janice's husband, is a natural Witch/ Druid reincarnated and a founding member of Craeftgemot Witan-coveyne (a Druid church and school in Florida). He also is a Techno Druid, using both modern science and the ancient occult sciences in alchemical and psychic forms of magick and divination. This translates to Techno Druids using any and all things that work from above or below, if the price is right and the karma fair.



© Brom Hanks

Roll over the image for playback control





BECOMING AN EARTH PILGRIM

BY M.F. HARDING

Am I really here?

Can you see me clearly or am I only a blur?

When I speak out loud, do I make a noise or am I but an echo?

Do our Gods love me?

Do our Gods even know me?

When I am gone, will anyone remember me?

When I am gone, was I ever really here?

This has been building in me for several years now and now, I think, the time has come to put it down on paper. Perhaps others who 'journey' will read this, but then again, perhaps not. Whether anyone ever reads this is quite beside the point, for I did not strive to become an Earth Pilgrim, it somehow sought me out. How did this come to pass? What did I do that was so very different?

Nothing.

Everything.

I suppose this began years ago when I was a child really. My father was a lay minister with the United Church of Canada and it was through him that I recognized there was a measurable difference between a religion based on scripture and a spirituality based on observation and understanding. As an

only child near forests in the central Ottawa Valley and upstate New York, I had plenty of time on my hands. I quickly discovered that the words 'the only thing to fear is fear itself' are, actually, quite true. My experiences generated in that endless canopy of green were solitary and profound. I realized what small really was. It was me. What I was being taught in the classroom and what I watched unfold in those forests were profoundly different. I wondered why that was so. I sought to find out. That is when my journey to understand began.

I was told that it is unusual that one comes nose-to-nose with a black bear in the spring. When I came upon one, I was not scared of the bear, and I was delighted to discover that his breath was quite sweet. I was also told it is dangerous for a child to sit amongst a



pack of Timber Wolves while their pups play. I could not have disagreed more. I was a pup too, and so we played together. When they play, they are innocent and sneaky. They cheat too, so we got along quite well. Yet, when these moments happened, they all seemed quite normal (even expected) to me. When fear is absent but respect is not, everything becomes possible.

I entered this wild classroom with no preconceptions. I simply sat, watched, and learned. I watched the birds, insects, fish, and animals. They had agendas quite independent from my modern world—from the civilized world—from the world of teachers and math problems and exams. I decided early on that X is a letter that has no value at all. It represents a sound only, and trying to find its 'value' is an entirely pointless exercise. My math teachers believed differently. I ignored them. They were hardened and beyond any of the lessons that I could teach them. I felt sorry for them because I had already journeyed beyond them.

There was an added bonus to this new solitary classroom: It was considerably quieter. I began to watch relationships unfold. I found that a simple stick was, in fact, many things. To ants, it was an elevated highway that they used to transport food and their eggs from one nest to another. To a bird, that same stick might be a perch from which to observe the world and hunt food. To a wolf pup, it was a wonderful toy. It was the same

stick, but it had different relationships. It was a gift to all of these creatures from a mighty tree. I wondered, if a simple stick wore this many hats, what then was the tree? What then was a pond? The sky? The world?

Slowly, the veil of ignorance and fear fell away only to be replaced by questions beyond count. The more I see and learn, the less I know. I suppose by the time I am 90, I will have seen it all and know absolutely nothing whatsoever. That is the way of things. I am quite content in that knowledge.

My travels, at times, took me far from the world of men and their conventions. They took me to the top of the ancient mountains in the Adirondacks of New York. The world is easier to see from up there, but its subtleties are harder to perceive. One day from the top of one mountain, I saw lightning strike the top of nearby mountains. I realized that certain forms of fear have advantages. When used properly, fear will preserve life. I married fear with prudence and took to my heels. At the time I called it 'a prudent retreat.' Call it what you will. You will get no argument from me. I escaped with both my life and that bit knowledge concerning fear intact.

It was here in the mountains of upstate New York that I met a black bear. I knew that black bears did not include people in their list of dietary choices but respect is critical. I was delighted when several joined me for dinner one evening after a long hike. I performed another



prudent retreat when they arrived, and they immediately helped themselves to my supper without so much as a by-your-leave—as it should be, too: They are gigantic.

The rest of my food was tied high in the trees, well out of their reach.

From the relative security of a three-sided sleeping platform called a lean-to, I watched this family group scavenge for morsels. They tried in vain to reach my cache of food. I chuckled as one tried to jump up and snag it. Bears are funny looking when they try to jump. Another climbed the tree and tried to get it that way. They are very powerful climbers. They upended 40-gallon drums of garbage and scattered them about. They chased these heavy cans and played with them the same way a cat plays with a squeaky toy. It is impressive to see a huge steel drum sail over a picnic table from a simple swat.

They sniffed every nook and cranny, looking for new shoots and insects. They also watched me watch them. I did not move. Their powerful sense of smell makes them very methodical. Their great strength makes them relentless. They

© Barbara Hyatt



M.F. Harding with his dogs

employ an odd grace in everything they do. After a time of eating and playing, they wandered off... or so I thought. One of these curious young bears came back. It must have wondered why I did not leave when

they first arrived. So, as I looked around a corner of the lean-to to check if they had truly left, the bear looked around the same corner to see why I stayed.

It was a singular moment of pure magic. I was nose-to-nose with a giant of the forest. His intelligent dark eyes sparkled with wonder. He sniffed me. I sniffed him back. Then he pulled away slightly as though embarrassed to have disturbed me. We looked at each other for maybe the count of five heartbeats. Then, with his curiosity satisfied, he turned and left. After this moment of high exhilaration was over, I felt profoundly alone. Sleep did not come quickly, but when it did, I slept deeply.

The magic was far from over.

I awoke the next morning to something soft and cold landing on my cheek. It was snowing. Spring in the mountains is like that. A brilliant blanket of white covered my sleeping bag and most of the floor of the lean-to. I sat up,



rubbed the sleep from my eyes. I opened them to an astonishing sight. It was a single black bear sitting like a dog beside a picnic table staring at me. He, too, was covered in a light dusting of snow. He seemed to have been waiting for me to wake up.

I might have actually said "Good morning." Honestly, I cannot really remember, but it would be like me to say something stupid like that. The bear looked from me, upwards to the hanging cache of food, and then back at me. He then licked his lips. He was a clever bugger I will give him that. I was at a complete loss for what to do. It is illegal to feed bears in New York State, and at least one of us knew that. There is a very good reason for not feeding bears. They are smart and can become accustomed to being fed. In very short order, they would expect it from others. It would be harmful to the people and deadly to the bears.

A far more immediate truth was that feeding wild bears alone in the wilderness is probably very dangerous. I could not—I must not feed this bear. It was a bit of a predicament. I was alone in the forest with a hungry bear looking at me clearly expecting some kind of breakfast. My decision-making process was not coming up with a workable solution that had me walking away with my food and gear intact and without a black bear following me. I did not need another pet.

My only clear solution was to leave

the food where it was and try to walk out without it. I was still twenty miles from anywhere. On top of everything else, it pre-supposed that this bear would actually let me do that. I finally decided to do what I did best, what I had done since I was a child. I simply sat, watched, and waited.

We sat and watched each other for quite a long time. He kept looking up at the food in the tree. I kept quietly watching him do that. Hours passed, and neither of us moved. The snow was deepening on both of us. I was starting to get cold. Finally, the bear seemed to tire of all this and got up. He took one more longing glance at the food bag, looked back at me with a derisive snort, then lumbered away into the trees.

A few moments later, two New York Park Rangers stomped down the trail and into the clearing. I sat and quietly watched them for a few seconds, too. One of them noticed me.

"Hey, you OK?" one asked.

"Yeah," I said.

"You know there have been bears sighted around here," he said.

"Really?" I replied.

"Yup. There are some fresh tracks here. You're lucky you had your food up in the trees. You better pack up and get going before one comes back," he said.

"Yes, sir," I said. It didn't take very long for me to get ready and hit the trail.

I ate as I walked, wondering if it was the approach of the Rangers that finally scared the bear off. I believe that



was probable.

I learned a lot that day, but it took me years to decipher the lessons:

- « Wild does not necessarily mean dangerous.
- « Respect is not simply a human trait. It is used by many species.
- « Patience is a very powerful tool that takes no action to use.
- « Knowledge and understanding transcends all.

This was another small step on the path to understanding one of the many

magnificent lives with whom we share this planet.

I pray that your journey progresses unfettered and unimpeded.

With my blessings,

An Earth Pilgrim

M.F. Harding is a practicing solitary Druid and, for the past five years, his pilgrimage has brought him to Campbell River, B.C. For the last 27 years, he has made a detailed study of the Coastal Rainforests of Western Canada and Vancouver Island. He lives there with his wife Barbara and their Border Collie, Daisy-Mae.



AN INVITATION TO YOUTH AND CHILDREN

Submit your original work for publication!

Here at *Druid Magazine* we've devoted an entire department to showcase the original creative work of our youth. This is what *Children of the Forest* is about. These beautiful cute geniuses, so truthful and sacred, are on a journey just like adults. We want to publish their drawings, colorful paintings, unique stories, and verse, showcasing them as they travel through the forest of life. We are amazed at what we can learn from them—and we hope to help them change the world.

So far, we've had the privilege of publishing a variety of children and youth. In the premier issue, we published an essay on what it means to be a Pagan by Cayla, age 11, and a poem and drawing about an urban garden by Johann, age 11. In the second issue, twins Eliana and Jasmyn, age 8, shared their beautiful nature art. Soon, we plan to showcase a drawing of a fox by a young girl and a drawing of a bird in a tree by a boy. We are excited to see future works.

The submission method is tailored for the young. We welcome input by parents or guardians and are happy to discuss any concerns with them. Our policy is to publish only the child's first name/ nickname and age unless the parents and child really want the full name published. The magazine is open to all readers from around the world so we want children to be safe. All material goes through our standard editorial process, which includes checking for relevance to our audience, appropriate content and language, readability, grammar, APA style, and plagiarism. If changes are made, we will obtain approval prior to publication.

We hope to publish many more submissions by the children of the forest. Send any submissions, comments, or questions to us using [this form](#). We look forwarding to hearing from you!

Blessings and Peace,

Ruth Ann Oskolkoff
Department Editor



WRITING
CONTEST
WINNER



Richard “Renard” Fox
On Becoming a Druid—For
the First Time

Runnerup: *Wintry Reminders*
by Jacqueline Black

WINTER 2016 CONTEST PROMPT

While traveling deep in the forest during the fall season, you come across an imposing stag caught in a hunter’s snare. After a moment of contemplation, you gently approach and free it from the binding. Once you do, a whirl of leaves transforms the creature into a wise old Druid. After heartfelt thanks, she pulls a box from her flowing robes and whispers, “Inside this box is the key to your inspiration. Use it well.” Describe what happens next...

ON BECOMING A DRUID—FOR THE FIRST TIME

BY RICHARD “RENARD” FOX

I looked at the box, yet still stood enthralled by the transformation that had just happened before my eyes. I knew it held no threat, but my arms would not move to take it, only my eyes were seemingly free to move. I felt the wind rustle in the trees all about me, heard the birds talking and calling among themselves, and felt the warmth of the sun upon my

face. It was a normal day in every way, yet it was no longer normal in any sense of the word.

The Druid extended the box towards me and I could see that every bit of it was carved with all the animals of the forest. As the box approached me, the animals began to move, each one slowly changing into another. It was more beautiful than



anything I had ever seen, and from what seemed like a distance, I saw my arms stretching out to receive this amazing box.

As I did so, I felt the wind pick up. I could feel its randomness receding as the various gusts and eddies gathered together just beyond my sight. I could sense all the birds in the area coming closer to me, landing in the trees all around me; all talked clearly and all at once in a cacophony of sound that overwhelmed my ears, speaking in a language that was just out of my range of understanding.

I was lost in a place that was not a place at all, watching a box that was not a box, with all of nature crossing upon its lid in an endless stream. I watched in fascination as my hands stroked it, caressing the wood, but also all that was there, feeling a connection I could not understand and yet I knew it, like you know a fond memory from your distant

past. I knew for a moment *Hiraeth*, the great longing.

Without a thought to act, I saw my hands gently move to its lid and begin to open it. The wind suddenly gathered its will and came thundering upon me, forming a vortex all about me and swirling like my own personal tornado. I could hear within it many voices—so many voices, some whispering and some shouting, some human but most not.

The birds that had encircled me in the apparent world came suddenly into my awareness, their voices rising in a crescendo, and suddenly I knew what they were saying—each bird *welcoming* me, like I was returning to friends after a long journey.

Inside the box, there was a simple gold-rimmed mirror. The surface was clearer than the calmest, deepest mountain lake. As I took it into my hand, I could feel that it was warm to my touch. When I looked into it, I saw my own eyes

© Harmony Fox



Fire Druid Richard "Renard" Fox



looking back. Within that pristine clearness, my eyes had a depth I had never seen before—one that pulled me into them.

As I looked deeper into my eyes, they in turn looked out at me almost as if they belonged to someone else. They drew me into them, looking deep beyond the physical eye to all that was connected to them. I stood there stunned at finding myself being both the watcher and the watched and being able to see through both sets of eyes.

As I stared deep into my mind and soul, I began to see activity *beyond* my eyes, a series of small movements, a fluttering of dark images touched with bits of beautiful color. As my attention followed the path of my eyes, the shapes came into a clearer focus. Their wings and feathered heads began to take shape, and I realized I could clearly see the nearby birds in this mirror. And they were all looking directly at me.

My eyes drew back, and I looked again within the mirror at my eyes and realized with a start they were no longer *my* eyes at all into which I was staring. Instead, they were the dark piercing eyes of a bird. As I let my mind again see through the eyes in the mirror, I realized it was not just *any* bird, but was one of the nearby birds that was looking at me.

As I looked through that bird's eyes, all of its life's memories past before me in a running river of images, and I began to see what *it* had seen. I saw it look down into the eyes of a coyote that was hunting it this morning. Then I was

seeing through the *coyote's* eyes. And I saw what he had seen. Slowly, the process repeated itself as each part of nature looked and saw into the eyes of another part of all that is and I gained those... insights.

I saw that there was an endless stream of knowledge and information that passed between all creatures great and small. As the stream carried me further and further away, I was overwhelmed by the vastness of what I was a part of, of the network that reached out ever further to touch every living creature.

Suddenly, I realized that the stream of images had stopped at some point, and I found that I was staring straight ahead out through the eyes of that imposing stag that had been caught in a hunter's snare, alive because of the kindness of this man that stood before me. As I thought about this, I found myself shedding tears of gratitude that I was part of this incredible web of life.

Slowly, I returned to myself, and, upon awakening, I found myself alone in the forest. The Druid was gone as was the deer, but also gone was the box as it had accomplished what it was meant to do.

And I was once again the same man, yet I would never be the same again.

*Richard "Renard" Fox is a Fire Druid, the Guardian of the **Druidic Dawn**, the Editor-in-Chief of **Aontacht** magazine, and a warrior poet who lived mostly outdoors in the forests of the United States for more than 18 years.*

During that time, he planted more than 700,000 trees while he lived and developed his Nature Magick in the deep forests.



WRITING CONTEST

WINTRY REMINDERS

BY JACQUELINE BLACK

"Inside this box is the key to your inspiration. Use it well." She smiled and handed me the box. The sleeves of her dark green cape slid back to reveal fair but weathered skin and clean nails. Surprising, considering they were hooves only a minute ago.

I bent my head and accepted the box. It was small, about six inches wide and four across. The wood was very dark, and there was a small berry-and-leaf pattern etched onto the cover and around the sides, weaving around like Celtic knot work. When I drew my eyes away from the box to look back up and thank her, she had already transformed back into the stag and silently retreated deeper into the forest. Only the wisp of the tail in the bushes showed me in which direction she, (or he now?) had wandered off.

Looking up, I saw that I still had

some time before I had to make my way back home. I wandered over to a tall fir tree and looked at the box more closely. Ah, sloe berries! It's a blackthorn pattern around the box. Most curious indeed. What could possibly be in a blackthorn box that is the "key to my inspiration?" This was surprising. Blackthorn is, of course, no ogham to take lightly.

I wrapped the box up in my scarf and tucked it safely into my backpack. This was clearly going to need more time than a quick think in the woods, and truth be told, the air was starting to cool down and nip at me. Pulling my jacket around me a bit tighter, I thanked the spot for the experience and the gift, and I sent a heartfelt thanks out to the old Druid. She must have been particularly powerful to not only change her shape on demand, but her sex as well. Would time and patience reveal her identity to me?

Nicole Sussurro

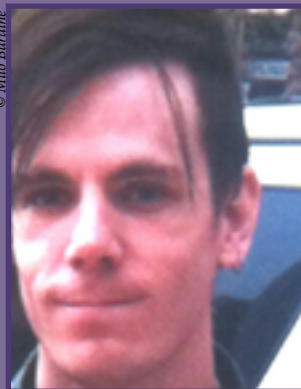
Nicole is an OBOD Ovate and lead organizer for the OBOD Seed Group of the Oak and Eagle in Burke, VA. She is a mead-maker, gardener, cat herder, and wife to DM Ritual Space Department Editor David North.

© Nicole Sussurro



MANY THANKS TO OUR SPECIAL GUEST JUDGES

© Milo Burdine



Milo Burdine

Milo lives in Chicago, where he works in theological libraries. He gathers inspiration for his writing through dreams, the natural world, and the spirit realms.



No matter. I had a box to figure out.

I turned around and made my way back to the path to get home. The light through the trees was growing dimmer, and I could hear my familiar caw at me as she bade me hurry. "I'm coming, I'm coming!" Silvia, my crow, was extremely punctual and better than any alarm clock I'd ever had.

The road was full of twigs and leaves, but there were some late, purple wildflowers still looking up at me. The Green Man smiled at me in greeting as I walked past a mighty oak.

"Sorry I can't chat today!" I called out. "I got this weird little box I'd like to talk to you about later, if that's all right?"

"Sure, Little Friend. We'll find each other tomorrow. Have fun with your key."

"Hey wait, do you know what it is?"

"The question is, do you?" He laughed merrily as he vanished.

I rolled my eyes. Duh. Of course he knew. What doesn't he know? I snorted at myself and heard Silvia caw in what I assumed to be her giggle. I liked that he still called me "Little Friend" after all these years.

Walking along the path, my mind

began to wander. *Key to your inspiration.* What was I lacking inspiration to? What am I trying to do that needs a boost? Image icons of a multitude of projects cluttering up my desktop immediately came into my head. I wasn't lacking inspiration, I was lacking direction. My workload was stretching me thin and all

I wanted was to turn off my laptop and sit in the woods. Maybe I wasn't focused in one direction because I was lacking inspiration? Maybe I wasn't making direct choices because none of them really

inspired me? Was there something I was afraid of?

Ah, the goosebumps hit me like a tidal wave, letting me know I was going in the right direction. I snapped out of my train of thought long enough to look around and realize I was at the gate to my building. I took out my keys and let myself through the gate and into the apartment house, up two flights of stairs, and into my flat. I took off my shoes and jeans and quickly jumped into my favorite pair of dark purple yoga pants. I wandered over to my kettle and made some tea. As the water boiled, I could

© Jacqueline Black



hear the thought echo again in my head,
"What are you afraid of?"

"Oh, I don't know," I said aloud. "A million bits of modern day b-o-l-o-g-n-a?"

The water boiled, and I fixed myself some warming sage tea with a big spoonful of honey. I brought the tea and my backpack into my room and sat on the big cushion against the wall, under the window—my special spot. Putting the tea down, I carefully brought out the little box and unwrapped it, throwing my scarf lightly on the small chair in the corner. I put the box on the floor in front of me, crossed my legs, and sipped my tea.

Blackthorn—one of its more potent qualities is to have you face your fears. After some thought, it hit me. Whispering, I said aloud, "But if I do what I really want, will anyone even listen?"

The box glowed a little, and I froze. I said the fear out loud, and the box

opened. I didn't even know it was locked!

I put the tea aside and reached out with both hands to remove the lid, which came off effortlessly.

What was inside made my heart skip a beat and my breath catch. Silvia cawed her approval in the tree outside my window. Inside was a relic from my childhood lost in the woods thousands of miles away. It was a key to my past joys and a symbolic reminder of a simpler time, releasing me of my fears and filling me with inspiration and direction. I knew right away how I'd spend the night reorganizing my desktop.

Jacqueline Black is a jack-of-all-trades who currently resides in Austria. She loves to write, explore, teach, cook, eat, and perform, and you can usually find her doing one of these things. She also manages the site www.earth-basedlifestyle.wordpress.com, where she tries to help guide people with the basics of all things "earthy."

WRITING CONTEST PROMPT - SUMMER 2016

Spring is coming, and you are considering which plants to grow this season. You look into your stash to remind yourself what you saved from the previous year, and you notice a package of seeds you have never seen before. Being the curious Druid you are, you plant a few of these seeds. Describe what happens next...

RULES



MY INSPIRATION



BY R. JUDAS BROWN

The box in my hands was a rich, nutty brown with nuanced shading where rings crossed its surface. Rather than sharp corners, it rounded smoothly, and neither joinery nor hinge marred its outer skin—and the sense began to grow in me that, however impossible, the box had been grown for its purpose rather than crafted.

Looking back up, I found myself once again alone, but not lonely. The forest itself brushed against my senses. Overhead, the wind whispered through the leaves before falling to rustle the grasses that grew between the thick trunks. Sunlight dappled to the forest floor, warming my body. I breathed in the smell of loamy earth, of flowering plants, and the far-off promise of rain that the clouds gathering far above represented.

Opening the box, I'm not sure what I expected. Perhaps a philter of some strange, fermented root that would set my mind afire. Maybe a ring, purest gold adorned with a mystical jewel that would grant me untold power. Instead, I was met with myself. At least a small, wooden version of me.

I walked, aimless, all the while looking at the tiny effigy, no more than three inches in length. Each aspect was a perfect mimicry, even sporting a well-wrought, down-filled vest over a rough, well-used pair of jeans. Of their own accord, my feet found a well-used game trail, and turning north, they led me to a

creek, no more than a few feet deep and clear with mountain runoff. A tree had fallen, arcing across the creek to rest its boughs on the far side. That's when I noticed the figure wore no shoes.

After baring my feet, I stepped into the cool water, stifling an involuntary shiver as it sang through my toes and across my ankles. Sitting on the tree, the tension of my week, the so-called real world, melted away, carried off by the water to disappear around a bend in the distance. With perfect clarity, I understood.

I took the tiny man, the meanest part of my being, and plunged him into the stream. Letting my fingers open, in the same motion that I felt him drift away, they brushed past a smooth, rounded rock. I dug into the muddy silt, probing underneath. With a tug, I freed it from the creek bed.

The rock nestled perfectly inside the box. I let the grass and fallen leaves dry my feet as I retraced my path. The colors were a little brighter, the sun warmer, and the sounds around me sang in my ears. It was my spirit, my soul, which was opened and aware beyond just what my body perceived. I had left a bit of myself in the forest, but I carried a bit of that forest with me.

R. Judas Brown has appeared in several anthologies, is working with The Ed Greenwood Group, and serves on the board of directors for the Quincy Writers Guild in Quincy, IL. He is a Heathen married to a wife following Druidry, and together they constantly seek to guide their family through a blended spiritual path.





WELCOME TO REVIEWS

BY SARAH DISLER

The Reviews department takes a close look at books, music, podcasts, and other forms of art/ expression that focus on or have a connection to Druidry. Send us submissions or make suggestions for something relevant you come across (including your own creations) for possible review in the next magazine!

Sarah Disler has been in the Bardic Grade in the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids since early 2015. She has a stellar career looking at pictures all day, which required years and years of intense training (not really). Most of her energy goes into animal sound mimicry and chaos management. Some would also call it 'raising toddlers.'



IMBOLC: RITUALS, RECIPES & LORE

Neal, C. F. (2015). Imbolc: Rituals, recipes & lore for Brigid's Day (Llewellyn's Sabbat Essentials). Woodbury Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications.

Some days, I wonder if I can do a passable job of being a mom and a full-time employee while still getting my Druid on. Do I have time to learn about Imbolc and truly honor what it means to me? More importantly, do I have the ability to cook tasty things for this sabbat? After reading Carl Neal's (2015) book on the upcoming Brigid celebration, I can easily say yes! Neal made celebration of this holiday easy and accessible, even for this newbie Druid who is anything but a 'Pinterest mom.'

The author covers a wide range of perspectives on this sabbat without

getting tedious. Due to the variety of paths we follow, it is difficult to specifically address all of them. Neal does, however, acknowledge this right away and encourages his audience to adapt Imbolc traditions to "suit your own life and environment," and "embrace each season's unique energies" (Neal, 2015, p 111).

At the same time, he is not so general and vague that any of the important themes of Brigid's Day are lost. This book, and possibly the other books in the Llewellyn Sabbat series, is great for a beginner because the basics



(of rituals and of Imbolc in general) are laid out so clearly. I am not (yet) someone who dabbles in spells or divination, but this book made me want to run outside with some smoke and see what the clouds could tell me. Neal also lists a number of ways to celebrate Brigid's Day that have nothing to do with rituals or spells, such as doing a little spring cleaning or literally planting a seed. Maybe this isn't the right time for you to start a big bad new plan in the

Imbolc spirit, but you can't go wrong with some new herbs.

If you are an old hat at this whole Pagan thing or Imbolc is absolutely positively your fave, this book may not go in depth enough for you. But if you don't pick it up, you may also miss out on some awesome recipes. I tried the soda bread recipe and it turned out super tasty. And seriously, a recipe for butter?! Hello, new favorite sabbat.

© Sarah Disler



Reviews Department Editor Sarah Disler makes soda bread from "Imbolc: Rituals, Recipes & Lore for Brigid's Day"



AROUND THE AMERICAS



HALLOWED HOMECOMING: MEETING THE ANCESTORS

BY ROBERT PACITTI



The cauldron was stirred and merriment abounded at the inaugural Hallowed Homecoming retreat in Triangle, VA over the weekend of November 6th, 2015 to celebrate Samhuinn. Hosted at a campsite in serene Prince William Forest Park, this pan-Pagan event was well run and offered the nearly 100 attendees several Druid-centric presentations that honored the ancestors and the Old Ways.

The event, themed Communing with the Ancestors, was organized by a collaboration of Pagan leaders from Northern Virginia, including David

North, DM's *Ritual Space* department editor, and Nicole Sussurro, the coordinators of the Oak and Eagle OBOD Seed Group from Burke, VA. The guest of honor was none other than Rev. Selena Fox, author, priestess, advocate, and founder of *Circle Sanctuary*, a non-profit nature spirituality church headquartered in Wisconsin.

The campsite, Camp Mawavi, proved to be an excellent setting for Samhuinn. Located in Prince William For-

est Park, the wood and stone celebratory halls melded perfectly with the falling leaves of late autumn. The lodging cabins were rustic, but well cared for, and the event staff did a great job of preparing the space for the retreat. We traveled through trees and shrubs from our cabins to the main events in the common space.

The sessions with Rev. Fox opened up important dialogue about finding our

personal ancestry, who and what an ancestor can be, and techniques to call upon and honor them. She did an excellent job of marrying the ideas of ancestry and

healing, and while the perspective felt Wiccan, the material could be appreciated by anyone with a Pagan inclination.

Rev. Fox has spent decades as a religious freedom advocate and was a major figure in the inclusion of the pentacle symbol on the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' list of emblems of belief. This work was realized in the spirit realm during the event as Rev. Fox, accompanied by Rev. David & Rev. Jeanet Ewing,



The cabins at Camp Mawavi, Prince William Forest Park, Triangle, VA



led a Warrior Blessing Ritual on the final day of the event to honor those who have served in the Armed Forces and as first responders.

OBOD Ovate Nicole Sussurro offered a heart-felt and evocative telling of the **Mari Lywd**, a Welsh wassailing folk tradition. Nicole, a strong orator and Bard, used song, story, and a crafted Mari Lwyd hobbyhorse skull to create an atmosphere of otherworldly beauty. The presentation reached its zenith as she led participants to an adjacent workshop to perform the traditional wassail in full regalia. While I have attended other workshops on the Mari Lywd, Nicole's dynamic personality and focus on the experiential made the tradition come alive in a new and immersive way.

Our very own Druid Magazine Editor-in-Chief and OBOD Druid Renu K. Aldrich presented a powerful session on Healing through the Bardic Arts. A licensed marriage and family therapist and

a doctoral student, Renu utilized writing, drawing, movement, and music to weave spirituality into a journey of self-realization and to the activation of our inner-healer. Old wounds were brought to the surface and deep emotions were explored together in the group setting as the session evolved into a dialogue about what we feel when we create and experience art. This session showcased a great truth of the Pagan community—that above all else, the greatest gift that we give to each other is empathy and support.

Plans for the **2016 Hallowed Homecoming** are already in the works, and I am excited to see how this event develops. While there were some minor logistical issues that are to be expected at any first-year event, the staff was extremely diligent about getting feedback as to how to improve the event for the future. The Northern Virginia Pagan community is vibrant and strong, and I can

only see this event getting better every year.

Robert Pacitti is a member of the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids from the Philadelphia area. In his free time, he enjoys hiking, gardening, and studying off-grid living solutions.



Hallowed Homecoming attendees perform the traditional Mari Lywd wassail



© Brom Hanks

ON BEING AN AMERICAN DRUID

ON BEING AN AMERICAN DRUID

GROWING ROOTS

BY MELANIE HERD

My childhood was spent moving around the United States. I lived in three states (Illinois, Ohio, and Virginia) and 10 different homes/ apartments before graduating high school. Moving around so much, I often felt disconnected, rootless. I would begin to attach to a place and people and feel like I belonged; then my family would move, and I'd begin the process all over again.

As a kid, I was often outdoors, playing and climbing trees. I was typically unkempt and covered in dirt, a happy tomboy. One of my favorite memories was when my older sister and I snuck out of our house in the middle of a rainy summer night to jump around in puddles in the street. Still, I have to admit that I really wasn't a huge fan of nature. When my parents took my sister and me camping for the first time, we refused to sleep in the tent with them. Instead, we huddled together in our family van

for the night, eating cookies and wishing we were home. I was without my cat to snuggle, in the depth of the Shenandoah Mountains, where it was extremely dark at night and "scary" noises could be heard from every direction. That was a

far cry from running through my neighborhood creek and woods or climbing my favorite trees. Oh, how I would love to experience that family trip as a kid

© Melanie Herd



Sunflowers, Bear Creek Park, Colorado Springs, CO

again, but as I am now!

After elementary school, I became an indoor kid. I was shy, socially awkward, and introverted, so I spent my time doing my favorite things—hanging out with my cat while reading or listening to music, going to a museum or movie with close friends, or, when I was older, working after school and during the summer. Eventually, I moved to Tennessee to study archaeology at the University of Memphis, still preferring to spend the majority of my time indoors. However, I soon became inspired by my memories of



© Melanie Herd



Chicago Botanic Garden

trips to the Chicago Botanic Garden with my mom when I was younger. I loved smelling and seeing the beautiful flowers and plants throughout the different gardens. So I decided to explore the Memphis Botanic Garden after class one day, and I was drawn to the Japanese garden. I found a spot, and just sat there for a long time. It was so calming and peaceful. I hadn't felt that way for many years. I went back to that same spot from time to time while at school, visiting especially when I was feeling stressed; it always made me feel better.

After college, I worked for one season as an interpretive park ranger, giving tours of cliff dwellings while telling visitors information about the Ancestral Puebloans who once lived at Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado. That's where I fell in love with nature—completely, unabashedly, head over heels in love. I lived in a small housing area on top of the mesa and spent hours on my days off

walking the trails by myself. I explored Colorado and New Mexico with friends, camping for only the second time since that oh so terrible night "camping" as a child. Nights outdoors, once scary, were all of a sudden filled with the alluring sounds of coyotes as well as dazzling stars piercing the dark sky. I loved every moment of it.

There was, however, one place at Mesa Verde that I didn't love—Balcony House. When giving a tour of Balcony House, one of the cliff dwellings, the ranger is the first person to climb a double-wide, 32-foot ladder leading into the abode. Every time I stepped foot into Balcony House, I felt an overwhelming sense of, "Get out!" I knew I wasn't welcomed there, and I felt threatened. Eventually, I expressed my concerns to some fellow rangers who belonged to the Hopi tribe. One of the rangers thought about it a bit and asked me if I ever let the spirits know why I was there. He



suggested that I state my intentions. So, during my next tour, as I climbed over the ladder and placed my feet on the dwelling floor, I said in a quiet voice, "I would like to tell people about you if that's okay. I mean you no harm." I knew I was given permission when, immediately after speaking, the feeling of dread passed. From then on, I felt welcomed each time I entered Balcony House.

During the end of my season at Mesa Verde, a fire broke out that burned 4,781 acres of the park. Because I had gone through a ranger training program at the University of Memphis, I had my "Red Card," which meant that I was allowed to join the park fire crew and battle the spreading fire. There were definitely some scary moments. But, just like in life, even the dark, difficult times have beauty within them. And out of those hard times comes growth.

Late one evening, when a group of us were cutting a fireline, a line dug to remove fuel from the land, I saw what looked like hundreds of campfires creeping up along the side of the canyon. The beauty of those fires was breathtaking. I recognized the devastation that was taking place as the trees, plants, and animals burned, while knowing that the fire was necessary for regeneration. The next day, the wind changed direction on us as we were cutting a line in another section of the park, and we hightailed it into a burn area for safety. Walking within its charred, seemingly lifeless space, it was hard to believe that soon seedlings would sprout through the ground, dotting the land with

pops of green, and that birds and animals would move back into the area as the land transformed itself with new life.

Although I started to pay attention to and communicate with the spirit world and nature years ago, it wasn't until my Druidic studies began in 2010 that my connection with nature and the spirit world became stronger. Now, I get messages and affirmations often. For example, my family and I live next to a 545-acre park in Colorado Springs, and my husband and I walk with our dog every morning on the park trails. This past summer, we saw what seemed to be an unusually larger amount of mosquitos at the park. I was particularly annoyed one morning after trying to avoid yet another swarm, telling my husband, "There could be a bear standing right in front of me and I wouldn't even notice because I'm so focused on trying to avoid the mosquitos." My husband looked at me, then looked past me and said, "There's a bear over there." I looked to my right and about 50 yards away was a mamma bear keeping her eye on two cubs playing and anyone else who walked by.

This past summer, I received a message from nature that meant a great deal to me. My mom called to tell me that my step-dad, who had an autoimmune disease, was in the hospital and was going to have surgery due to a brain aneurysm. I knew my step-dad was in good hands. He was a doctor and he made rounds at the hospital he was admitted to, so they would take good care of him. I was due to visit my parents the following month,



and my mom didn't ask me to change my plans. After talking with my mom, I stepped outside to think about what I should do. Looking up at the sky, I saw a cloud in the shape of a person who was sprawled out, face down. I knew in that moment that I needed to fly to Chicago. I arrived too late at night to see him, but was with him and family in SICU the next day. And I was with him and family the following day when he passed away. I was able to say goodbye because I was open to receiving nature's message.

I live in America, but what I've learned is that no matter where I am in the world or how long I've been somewhere, I am connected. Far from my mobile childhood, I don't have to start from scratch to feel those attachments. I have roots everywhere because I see them differently now. They consist of energy threads that weave their way through the Earth and water, joining with the energy of every person, animal, plant, tree, and rock. They flow through the air,

weaving with the spirit of birds, rain, snow, and clouds. They travel into space, connecting with stars and planets. My roots are not constrained by time and space; they connect me with all that came before me and that are to come after me. They can feel strong at times and weak at other times, but they are always there; and I can tap into the connection at any time. The more I open myself up to the connection, the more awake I am to life, the easier it becomes to see my path and find my way.

References

National Park Service. *Mesa Verde fire history*. Retrieved from http://www.nps.gov/meve/learn/management/upload/fire_history_09.pdf

Melanie Herd, DM's chief copyeditor, lives in Colorado Springs and is in the Bardic Grade of the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids. She is also a member of Circes International, enjoys traveling, and loves spending time with her family and her favorite four-legged companion, a dog named Stoli.



© Melanie Herd

Bear Creek Park, Colorado Springs, CO



ON BEING AN AMERICAN DRUID

ON BEING AN AMERICAN DRUID

BY KENNETH FOOTE

When I considered writing this essay, my first thought was that the premise is backwards, at least for me. It isn't really about being an "American Druid" so much as being a Druid in America. Both *American* and *Druid* are evocative titles in and of themselves; once mated, I can see a perception created that in truth bothers me. Personally, I like to view Druidism from a more pantheistic perspective. I see the title American Druid as limiting, restrictive. It ties one to a place, a culture, and a perspective that in many ways runs contrary to being a Druid. Many agree that Druidry is a nature-based spiritual path based on our love of nature.

As a Druid living in America, I feel deeply blessed, and terribly distressed at the same time. I live in the wilds of Vermont, a small state in the northeastern United States. I'm just shy of Canada in an area of the state known as the Northeast Kingdom. It is quite beautiful here. Although I live in a village, we are still visited by whitetail deer, wild turkey, and even the occasional black bear! Vermont

has an interesting history. At one time, the state was about 70 percent deforested. Farming and logging by early European settlers devastated local ecosystems, extirpating a number of species, some that have not yet returned. However, as

life would have it, fortunes changed. Social and economic changes lead to a natural reversal of sorts. Today, approximately 70 to 80 percent of the state has returned to a forested condition. Many spe-

cies have returned as nature restored old habitats, while some species have been reintroduced, and at least one, the Eastern coyote, has returned in a new form, a coy-wolf hybrid. Still, species, such as grey wolves and cougars, both apex predators, have yet to return as a breeding population, possibly never to do so.

The gentle Green Mountains, maple, ash, oak, rivers, rills, and falls all call to my soul in a quiet and powerful way that comforts and consoles. Yet, being a peripatetic Druid, I have no illusions; I live in a beautifully wondrous bubble. Very little of America has been left untouched by

© Kenneth Foote



Walking path, Texas Falls, VT



the human hand. Wilderness has been reduced to designated areas, and, even there, forest fragmentation, pollution, and habitat destruction are constant threats. To me, being a Druid in America means being involved in the struggles life here has to face.

Being a Druid in America can also be a case of what you are “not.” One often isn’t part of a mainstream religion, a mainstream culture, or even really, a mainstream anything. It can be a solitary experience, one including an intimate collection of like minded others, or perhaps a periphery member of a similar organization. Personally, I am solitary, partially because of personality and partially because of simple geography. Location, location, location, as they say! Here in the Northeast Kingdom, there are simply not many Druids to be had.

In some ways, being a Druid in America means living vicariously through European Druids. While there is beauty, nature, and fellowship here, we do lack established heritage sites. There is so much culture, history, and place of being associated with classical Druids overseas that for some in America can only be seldom, or possibly never visited. The stand-

ing stones of the United Kingdom, sacred wells of France, the heritage of Gaul, all these and more, are aspects of the mythology, history, and allure of what we are as Druids.

It is hard to say which came first, but being a Druid in America has either shaped my life or life has certainly shaped my being a Druid. I have always, since childhood, experienced a draw to the outdoors, an uncanny call to nature. Since

my discovery of Druidism in the early 1990s, I have focused my life more and more in the direction of the environment. From earning an Associate’s degree in environmental science to a

Master’s degree in conservation biology, I have concentrated my academic life on the natural world. Today, my professional life reflects that pursuit as well. I currently work for the State of Vermont in the air monitoring section of the Department of Environmental Conservation. I now work to maintain and service a series of air-monitoring sites across the state that measure different air pollutants. As an artist, I have primarily concentrated on nature as a subject, with the aim of raising awareness of the world around us. One thing that became clear to me early

© Kenneth Foote



The scene “when you take the back way” to the author’s house in Vermont



on was the real meaning of a quote by Aldo Leopold (1949):

One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds. Much of the damage inflicted on land is quite invisible to laymen. An ecologist must either harden his shell and make believe that the consequences of science are none of his business, or he must be the doctor who sees the marks of death in a community that believes itself well and does not want to be told otherwise. (p. 197)

In some respect, I consider Aldo Leopold an American Druid of sorts, really a hero of mine. His land ethic was—and still is—an inspiration to continue the struggle to preserve and, when possible, recreate the conditions that can lead to the re-wilding of America.

This of course isn't an American

struggle, a European struggle, or even a continental struggle. The struggle to balance human life with that of the wild is a global struggle, one that touches every corner of this planet. As Druids, I feel we have a duty, even a sacred calling if you will, to not only leave a touch of wildness as we go, but also to strive to extend the reach of wilderness in order that all life, not just human, can live in balance. Which of course brings me back full circle. I see myself as a Druid in America; my Druid family is so much more than one country.

References

Leopold, A. (1949). *A Sand County almanac*. London: Oxford University Press, Inc.

Kenneth Foote lives and works in the wilds of Vermont with his wife, two dogs, two cats, two birds, and a fish named Trooper. Although he feels he has been a Druid all his life, he has been a part of the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids since the 1990s.

© Kenneth Foote



What lies behind the billboards off the highway close to Saint Johnsbury, VT



